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Cover picture

An untitled gelatin-silver print by Ian Grover reproduced from the catalogue to the exhibition of photographs which ended at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, last week and can be seen at the Gibbs Gallery, Charleston, South Carolina, during November and December. The catalogue, which contains 37 plates and an introductory essay by Susan Kismaric, is available from The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Compromises of a connoisseur

Francis Haskell

ERNEST SAMUELS with JAYNE NEWCOMER

Bernard Berenson: The making of a legend 639pp. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. £22.25.

0674 067797
COLIN SIMPSON
The Partnership: The secret association of Bernard Berenson and Joseph Duveen 323pp. Bodley Head. £15.
070 30585 X

Bernard Berenson's reputation has sunk very low since he died at the age of ninety-four in 1959. For a long time rumours of his shady connections with the art trade have been emerging from what have often been rather dubious sources. Well-known art historians who were widely believed to have been close friends and admirers have been distancing themselves from him: Kenneth Clark, first, and now Sir John Pope-Hennessy, who has told us that "he didn't greatly like" Berenson when they first met, and "liked him even less" on the second occasion. And, above all, the case of attributing unsigned or otherwise undocumented pictures and drawings to their supposed creators - the cause to which Berenson devoted (or sacrificed, as he claimed) his great talents - has in recent years been increasingly denounced as futile, even unworthy. There is thus a strong temptation - especially strong for those who, like the present reviewer, remain grateful for his hospitality and encouragement - to try to restore his reputation and accept him again in his own self-image as a disillusioned humanist sage presiding over some ultra-civilized court, some latter-day Urbino or Weimar, in which the rich and the beautiful, the well-born and the intelligent gossiped freely about love and politics and their friends (but never about money). This is a temptation that will not survive a careful reading of the plodding but fair and useful second volume of the official biography by Ernest Samuels.

The task of writing it must have been a difficult one, for by 1904, the year when it opens, Berenson had completed almost everything on which his reputation still rests - and deserves to rest: the articles on Sassetti (which, however, only appeared as a book in 1909); *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*; *Lorenzo Lotto* (surely, with Herbert Horne's

Botticelli and Kenneth Clark's *Leonardo*, one of the very best monographs on a painter in the English language), and three out of the four introductory essays to the *Lists* purporting to record the principal artists of the Italian Renaissance "with an index to their works". I exclude the first edition of the *Lists* themselves both because, as Berenson recognized, it soon became out-of-date, and also because the whole notion of such a compilation, which sets down only the (often controversial) conclusions and not the processes by which they were reached, strikes me as misguided - although the pocket version (published in 1932) of the second edition remains very useful as an approximate indication of what can be found where in the field of Italian Renaissance painting.

This volume of the *Life* is thus necessarily devoted to the four major themes of Berenson's existence during the years it chronicles: the social round (in which can be included a series of torrid though transient love-affairs); revision of earlier work; the art trade; and thwarted intellectual ambitions. Professor Samuels keeps us so well informed about the relentless stream of guests who stayed at Tatti and about Berenson's own visits to Paris and elsewhere that the reader comes to dread the passing of each year and the account of yet another Christmas with Edith Wharton; indeed, I got the feeling that Samuels himself got a little bored, because from time to time his prose nods off into a short (but well-deserved) snooze. One notable feature of this side of Berenson's life is the consistency of his opposition to Fascism and, later, to McCarthyism - he was of course equally hostile to Communism, but Communism would hardly have proved much of a temptation to his circle of friends. It is also evident that at all times of his life his many qualities won him the lasting devotion of younger men and, especially, women, of exceptional charm, sensitivity and intelligence. Compared to the detailed treatment of his socializing, the accounts given of the arduous revisions made to the *Florentine Drawings* and the *Lists* are not full enough to be of value to those interested in the history and theory of attributions and will probably strike other readers as somewhat tedious. And so we come to the trade.

Samuels's biography has been anticipated by Colin Simpson's muck-raking account of "the partnership" between Berenson and the notorious dealer Joseph Duveen. This received much publicity even before it appeared and it

has attracted a good deal of attention since. In fact, if one reads it in conjunction with Samuels's less sensational version of many of the same events, one finds that most of the actual episodes concerning Berenson are also to be found in the official biography. Nevertheless, Simpson's book is useful because he has had access to some sources which are not easily investigated (though he exaggerates their inaccessibility) and one can therefore assume that in his attempt to demonstrate that Berenson was "probably the most successful and unscrupulous art dealer the world has ever seen", he has put the case for the prosecution as powerfully as can be managed. It is a case which needs to be taken seriously, though it suffers not so much from the strident and even counter-productive tone of presentation as from the fact that the reader usually has to rely on Simpson's summary of the relevant documents rather than on straightforward publication of them. None the less, it seems clear beyond doubt that, during what was a particularly discreditable and dishonest period of art-dealing generally, Berenson's own behaviour was at least as discreditable as that of any art-dealer of the day. The account given here, often implicitly confirmed by Samuels, of his shiftiness and greed is profoundly unpleasant, and the stories of his smuggling pictures out of Italy (which could, of course, only be done with the complicity of those who should have been denouncing or preventing him) provide a painful and ironical commentary on the various Italian honours which were to be bestowed upon him after the Second World War. But it should also be clear, though it is not sufficiently clear to either of these biographers, that his behaviour was in no way exceptional for art historians at the time (and sometimes since) and that he has attracted so much attention only because he was the most famous and successful of them all. It is also true that from very early in his career he hoped to be able to leave his house and library to Harvard University and that he knew that this would only be possible if he could raise a sufficient endowment for them. None the less, the splendour of his life showed all too plainly that he was not trying to raise money only for what was to happen after his death.

All this, however, is secondary to the main charges that Berenson's relationship with Joseph Duveen was a dishonest one and that he deliberately misled clients into buying pictures which he did not believe to be authentic works by the masters to whom he attributed them.

Simpson publishes in full (and Samuels summarizes) the heads of the agreement between Berenson and Duveen which was signed in 1912. Two clauses must be quoted in part from this document in which Berenson, who all his life suffered from dyspepsia, is referred to throughout by the ludicrous code-name Doris, chosen apparently because it was the name of a similarly afflicted character in a Broadway revue:

Regarding Italian Pictures or Works of Art entered in "X" Book (a secret ledger), Duveen Brothers to pay Doris 25% of their net profits as and when made and realized, Doris following D.B.'s fortunes, D.B. having absolute freedom and disposition of arrangements with customers

and "Neither party shall divulge the fact, or leave anybody to infer, that Doris is paid by D.B. on a percentage basis." It is difficult to understand how it can be claimed that the acceptance of such a contract is compatible with the honour of a man who always saw himself essentially as a disinterested scholar, even if one who was, for financial reasons, compelled to stoop to the marketplace. But, however corrupting the terms, it does not automatically follow that Berenson actually was corrupted by them.

Simpson implies that Berenson gave deliberately misleading attributions on about a dozen occasions in all; but for only one picture does he supply documentary evidence to substantiate the allegation, and it so happens that about this case Samuels quotes another document which appears to lead to a different conclusion. Both writers agree that Berenson was reluctant to accept Duveen's pressure to attribute to Botticelli a picture which he believed to be by the far less known Jacopo del Sellaio, but Samuels indicates that Duveen conceded the point, whereas Simpson suggests that it was Duveen who won the day - temporarily, at least. Elsewhere it is still harder to be sure of the boundary between error and deceit, though some of Simpson's allegations are certainly very telling, even if it has to be emphasized - as Berenson constantly did when pressed to give an over-optimistic attribution - that (even on the assumption that he had no scruples) he could only maintain his reputation, and hence his value for Duveen, as long as his opinions were widely accepted: he had many enemies who would not have hesitated to pounce if he certified a picture that was demonstrably wrong. The most damaging of Simpson's accusations concern Berenson's relations with picture restorers and while I think that

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John C. 13.16

Simpson underestimates the extent to which restoration and prettification have always radically affected the appearance of the pictures we see in public and private collections as well as in dealers' galleries; it is certainly true that Berenson had a disconcerting habit of describing as being in excellent condition paintings which he had earlier dismissed as wrecks, but which had in the meantime been heavily repainted.

Years ago I published some blatant examples of such changes of mind on his part, and I certainly believed, indeed implied, that he had been guilty of real fraud. I am now not so sure. Berenson's dismissal of anything to do with the technical side of painting must seem amazing to most serious students today, and on at least one occasion (referred to by Samuels but curiously enough not by Simpson) he revealed his ignorance when it was directly against his own interest to do so. Challenged (during the course of a lawsuit when his reputation as a connoisseur was one of the issues very much at stake) about the authenticity of a picture attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, he was asked, "You've given a good deal of study to the picture in the Louvre?" "All my life, I've seen it a thousand times." "And is it on wood or canvas?" "I don't know." The clever *boutade* with which he then tried to extricate himself from this lame admission – "It's as if you asked me on what kind of paper Shakespeare wrote his immortal sonnets" – is perhaps more revealing of his approach to connoisseurship than we might expect. After the travels of his early days, his work on the *Lets* and on the certificates he wrote for dealers was very largely done on the basis of photographs, which played a greater part in his life than in that of any connoisseur before his time; and the effect of the photograph is, of course, to detach the image from the means whereby it has been created. One of the characters in Lessing's play *Emilia Galotti* of 1772 suggests that Raphael would have been the greatest of painters even if he had been born without hands. Berenson did not go as far as that, but he too was an idealist (in his fashion), and much of his writing on great art does suggest that he thought of it – just like Shakespeare's sonnets – as existing on a different spiritual plane from the materials which in fact made its creation possible.

It was partly this attitude that led him to hate and despise any form of art-historical scholarship and (like his mentor Giovanni Morelli) to postulate the existence of an almost unbridgeable barrier between life and connoisseurship. All his catch-phrases – *life enhancement*, *tactile values* and so on – demonstrate that the questions he asked of art were entirely concerned with what it could do for him (and for us) at the moment when he was writing about it. What the artist aimed to do, what his patrons had asked him to do, what his contemporaries had felt about him – such issues amounted to no more than pedantic antiquarianism which distracted attention from the only thing that mattered: the inducement of that Paterian ecstasy which had meant so much to him when he had first come to Europe and which he continued to experience even though (as he knew perfectly well) he was betraying its true essence by calculating its value in pounds and dollars.

Berenson was obviously tormented by this betrayal, but in his published writing and recorded conversation he showed agonized remorse not for the corruption with which he is now so often charged but only for his decision to sacrifice the historical masterpiece of which he believed himself capable in order to concentrate on the attributing of pictures which interested him less and less. He could hardly have done otherwise in public, but I suspect that even in private this was the issue that distressed him most. Berenson had an enviable gift for self-deception as far as his dealing was concerned. He may well have really believed that he "hated business" and "loathed success", and in any case he quickly learned to compartmentalize his life so skilfully that Dr Jekyll probably never quite realized what Mr Hyde was up to. But his knowledge of history was profound, and he desperately wanted to make his own contribution to the literature it had inspired.

The theme which enthralled him had already attracted many great minds: the apparent decline of the arts of the Mediterranean world in

late antiquity and their gradual revival during and after the Middle Ages. The word "apparent" has to be used, because, as Berenson well knew and deeply resented, certain German scholars had claimed that what had taken place in the fourth century AD had been an invigorating change rather than a collapse. Such an interpretation threw into question Berenson's whole approach – reached by who knows what winding and complex psychological routes – which was based on the traditional assumption that the two great epochs of European art had occurred in Periclean Athens and the High Renaissance in Italy and that what had happened between or after these essentially similar peaks could only be seen in relation to them as decline or groping revival.

It seems possible that one of the reasons he was hardly able even to begin his own book was that he could not cope with this central issue and that this must have exacerbated his hatred of German scholarship. Among the most unpleasant revelations of Samuels's biography is the xenophobic and antisemitic venom with which he referred to those great scholars who were being driven out of German universities in the 1930s (an antisemitism which is hardly redeemed by the enthusiasm with which in 1956 he was to welcome "the Israeli attack on the ridiculous troops of the lunatic subhuman Egyptians"). For Berenson these scholars, who have transformed our understanding of art, were "wonder-working Rabbis and cabalistic spell-binders" – and the very choice of words shows how closely they were associated in his mind with that sterile Talmudic learning which had dominated his Lithuanian childhood and from which he had escaped to the Mediterranean and to riches. And yet there is more to it than that. His particular bugbear, "the poseur . . . the Hitler of art study" Erwin Panofsky, was the very scholar who (admittedly much later) was, in his *Renaissance and Resurrections in Western Art*, to produce a superb example of just that broad, humane, witty, elegantly written cultural history which so tantalized Berenson, and of which he was incapable.

To read *Aesthetics and History* (1950) and *The Arch of Constantine or The Decline of Form* (1954) – the only surviving fragments of (or rather, sketches for) the book that Berenson so hoped to write – is disheartening. He was, it is true, in his eighties, and had emerged from a war in which his life was frequently at risk; but he had been thinking and talking about the issues under consideration for decades, and he assumed the authoritative tone of some-

Voyage towards a father

Alan Ross

RALEIGH TREVELYAN
The Golden Oriole: Childhood, family and friends in India
536pp. Secker and Warburg. £16.95.
0436534037

"I often feel that I belong to a tribe that is becoming extinct", Raleigh Trevelyan writes, meaning the tribe of those of us who were born in India and sent "home" to school at a tender age. His experiences as such a child play only too familiar a part in *The Golden Oriole*, but his book is less about himself than about those members of his family who have served with such distinction in India for the past 150 years. Sir Charles Trevelyan, who was born in 1807 and married Hannah, the sister of Thomas Macaulay, in Calcutta, was the first of them, and with various ramifications (the Trevelyan Indian connection has continued more or less to the present, Raleigh Trevelyan's father, though not in the main line of descent, was a soldier who spent the best part of his life in India. Now Raleigh Trevelyan himself, though bound to India by ties of blood, history and feeling rather than of service, has done his bit by writing this book. It is an act of filial piety, of a kind, certainly; but it is a great deal more than that.

In order to write *The Golden Oriole* Trevelyan made five separate journeys to the sub-continent between 1977 and 1984. The first journey, to the North-West Frontier Province



Bernard Berenson with Mary Costelloe in 1895, five years before their marriage. The photograph is taken from *The Partnership* by Colin Simpson, reviewed on this page.

one who is passing on the wisdom of experience. What emerges, however, resembles a literary equivalent to Frenhofer's *Chef d'oeuvre inconnu* in Balzac's great story. Petulance and anti-scholarly vindictiveness serve for argument; jokey puns or aphorisms jostle sentences as involved as any by the hated Germans; there is much repetition and a total refusal to take any account of fresh ideas. Of course, along with all this – as also in the diaries written at much the same time – there is constant evidence of his exhilarating and insatiable enthusiasm for literature in most of the European languages, of his incredible memory, of his love of art and of landscape and of life. There are also a few stimulating ideas.

A careful reading of Samuels and Simpson, along with Berenson's own works, suggests that by sticking to connoisseurship he made the right decision, however morally flawed the execution of it could sometimes be. It is not so much that the overwhelming majority of his attributions are today accepted as correct – for that, after all, is to make the (unprovable) assumption that today's connoisseurs must themselves be correct. It is rather that art history, like every other branch of learning, needs sign-posts, even inadequate ones, for any conclusions of interest to be drawn from it, and that those sign-posts are best erected by students whose intensive scrutiny of works of art can lead to the most persuasive paths for future research and understanding. The inherent risk

of connoisseurship is that although most of its results can no more be verifiable in the scientific sense than can those of any other inquiry in the field of the humanities, everyone agrees that a scientific answer does potentially exist: after all, someone *did* paint the particular picture under discussion. This can lead to futile dogmatism as well as useless anguish – and these are certainly not absent from the writings of either Berenson or his enemies. There have been times when, looking at the picture now in Washington which played so large a part in causing the final rift between Berenson and Duveen (the so-called "Allendale Nativity"), I have longed for a return to the earlier days of "pre-scientific" connoisseurship when it might have been possible to agree first with Duveen (and, ironically, later with Berenson) that the painting might indeed be by Giorgione – on the grounds that it is not good or beautiful enough to be by the incomparably greater Titian. In fact the notion, so widely held today, that attributionism is inherently corrupt rests on the assumption that money is the only agent of corruption. But historians of all kinds (Marxist or anti-Marxist, racist or anti-racist) are just as likely to be influenced by what they want to find as are connoisseurs, whose researches have their own intrinsic fascination, interest and importance. Every branch of writing or study carries its potential dangers: that of the book reviewer is censoriousness.

and taking in Peshawar and Kabul, had as its main objective Gilgit, where Trevelyan's father had been military adviser to the Maharajah of Kashmir and of which place Trevelyan had dreamlike childhood memories:

There were apricot trees, poplars, mulberries and pomegranates. In the distance were the great peaks of Dufurani and Haramosh, always covered with snow. I loved the call of the chukor, a kind of red-legged partridge, in the fields behind, and the great silences as evening fell, when we knew that the mar-khor, a wild goat, would be coming down the mountain-sides to drink. Sometimes in the afternoon we would hear the excited rhythm of drums and pipes . . .

The second journey, to Srinagar and Gulmarg, was also to childhood haunts, the Trevelyan summers being spent in Gulmarg. But already shadows were falling over the marriage of the author's parents and officer friends were being murdered at random. Moving back and forth in time Trevelyan follows the marital drama to its end twenty-five years later, in the process providing an account of the social side of Army life in India between the wars that in terms of romantic interest looks nothing in comparison with anything dreamed up by John Masters or M. M. Kaye.

Journey No 3, perhaps the strangest of all, was aimed at the Andamans, where at Port Blair Raleigh Trevelyan was born, his father having been put in charge of the garrison. Port Blair was a penal settlement – rare butterflies, wildflowers and sharks being as plentiful as prisoners. This journey took in Calcutta, because of the Trevelyan family connection; and also

Rangoon, where the author's parents had been married. A year later Trevelyan was in Sri Lanka, where, according to his mother, he had been conceived. Madras, where Charles Trevelyan had been Governor in 1859, was next stop, and after that Mysore and Ooty, whose wild elephants, Macaulay had said, could squash you to the shape of a half-crown. The fifth and final journey revolved round the mutiny sites, ten Trevelyan relatives having been murdered during the Cawnpore Massacre. There was a more congenial visit to Chhatrapur, the "Chhokrapur" of J. R. Akerley's *Hindoo Holiday*, to Udaipur, where Humphrey Trevelyan had been Political Agent in the 1940s, and finally to Goa, where, remarkably, the only link was a squint-eyed Goan cook who stole Colonel Trevelyan's First World War medals.

Within this framework of travel and of looking up the past for signs of family and friends Raleigh Trevelyan has written a remarkably perceptive book about India. In part it is an attempt to get to know his own father, with whom he did not get on well, through reworking his father's life in India. But more importantly it is a lucid and balanced inquiry into British values and behaviour during the period of British rule. It is written quite without illusion or prejudice, but with justifiable curiosity and respect. At times very funny and at others touching, *The Golden Oriole* could, quite simply, as an outstanding travel book, that it is also an oblique autobiography and an absorbing family history says much for the author's luck and discretion.

Flaws in the Finchley blueprint

John Campbell

KENNETH MINOGUE and MICHAEL BIDDISS
(Editors)
Thatcherism: Personality and politics
144pp. Macmillan. £25.50 (paperback, £9.95).
0333 447247
JOHN COLE
The Thatcher Years: A decade of revolution in British politics
216pp. BBC. £12.95 (paperback, £6.95).
0363 205733
TAM DALYELL
Morale: How Mrs Thatcher has misled parliament from the sinking of the "Belgrano" to the Wright affair
122pp. Hamish Hamilton. £10.95.
0241 121701

The phenomenon of Mrs Thatcher's domination of British politics in the 1980s raises with acute topicality the old question of the role of individuals in history, as against the role of ideas on the one hand and of broad impersonal changes in social structure on the other. For we are faced with two separate, or at least separable, phenomena: Mrs Thatcher herself and "Thatcherism". As several of the contributors to Kenneth Minogue and Michael Biddiss's symposium point out, Mrs Thatcher is unique among British prime ministers in having given her name to a political creed. Not even Gladstone or Churchill spawned an ism. In fact the only other figure in British political life I can think of who did – if you exclude Marx – is Cobden. Cobdenism became the economic orthodoxy of the nineteenth century, still honoured even in the twentieth long after it was irrevocably breached. Is Thatcherism in any way comparable as a guiding political philosophy for the end of this century? Does the name signify a set of attitudes which were forming anyway and could equally well have crystallized around any individual or none? Or is the intellectual phenomenon wholly dependent on the individual, merely the emanation of the personality which will quickly evaporate when Mrs Thatcher leaves the scene?

This is the central question which is addressed directly in the Minogue/Biddiss book and indirectly and anecdotally in John Cole's *The Thatcher Years*. It is difficult to draw a single conclusion from the nine very different essays which comprise the first; and still harder from the second, since John Cole as a working journalist writing immediately before a general

election necessarily hedges his bets. But two themes emerge quite forcibly. One is a widely held view that things will never be the same again; that Thatcher has changed the language and priorities of politics irreversibly; that some sort of "revolution" has taken place. At the same time there is widespread doubt whether there is any successor in waiting to keep up the momentum when Thatcher goes. Of course it can be said that Thatcher herself appeared from nowhere in 1975. But the dynamics of politics would suggest that any successor who suddenly materialized would be more likely to wish to distance himself from her legacy, as she did from Ted Heath, than dedicate himself to renewing it. This is surely the strongest reason for her own evident reluctance to envisage standing down. She herself has no faith in Thatcherism without Thatcher. While Thatcherism does exist as an identifiable body of social objectives, it has depended on her energy and sense of destiny to give it life.

And also on her luck. For the second theme that emerges – particularly from John Cole's book – is how gradually and almost fortuitously she herself acquired that sense of mission. Far from having been conceived as a coherent programme from 1975 or even 1979, Thatcherism has in fact invented itself as she has gone along. The prime minister who now comes before us asking for a third mandate to continue her daring counter-revolution was a great deal less certain, less specific and more generalized as to what she intended in 1979. In 1982, before the Falklands, Thatcherism seemed to comprise little more than conventional Tory deflation combined with some cautious union-bashing, which had been on the agenda for years; and it was not proving popular. Victory over General Galtieri lifted not only her image but her own self-confidence on to a new plane, from which it has never descended. But still the 1983 election was fought on a hollow manifesto full of generalities. The sale of council houses was already under way (though that too was an ambition that went back to Heath). But the privatization programme, "popular capitalism" and the whole co-ordinated assault we now see being unfolded on the values and institutions which support and have been supported by the Labour party, has developed only since 1983. The appetite has grown with the dawning sense of a historic opportunity.

Thatcherism, then, is a tide taken at the flood which has led on to . . . what? Certainly to a large place in the history books, if that is greatness. But serious reservations remain.

First there is the accidental nature of her pre-dominance. It took extraordinary courage to seize her chance in 1975 when, in Enoch Powell's phrase, the roulette wheel stopped in front of her; but the fact remains that at that moment she won because she was not Ted Heath, not because the Tory party was looking for a lurch to the right. And subsequently she has been kept in power, with the parliamentary illusion of a landslide majority, largely by the 1981 schism in the Labour party and an electoral system which gives absolute victory to the largest minority. Such a gerrymandered mandate makes it difficult to speak confidently of a historic transformation that will outlast the circumstances that have favoured it.

Secondly, the Thatcherite agenda is still more of a counter-revolution than a positive programme. It has swept away many of the abuses, anomalies and structural inefficiencies which have plagued British society for decades – and a good thing too. It may be persuasively argued (as it is by Digby Anderson and Julius Gould in the Minogue/Biddiss book) that only Thatcher's ruthlessness could have achieved so much. But beyond this there remains a dismayingly theoretical utopianism in the idea that everyone can be a capitalist, that effective freedom of choice in health, housing and education can be extended to all, that British industry can be left to fend for itself in a world where many of its biggest competitors are heavily subsidized (an echo of doctrinaire Cobdenism here, perhaps). When the vision extends to privatized water and private prisons it seems positively barmy. Thatcherism may have served and may still serve – though at an appalling human cost – as an invaluable corrective to the accumulated featherbedding of the past. But as a social blueprint for the next century – proposing to generalize the acquisitive instincts of Finchley on a national scale – it would be deeply uninviting if it were not so deeply unconvincing.

Here we come, thirdly, to the morality of Thatcherism. Even for the most intellectually convinced supporter of the economic theory for which she stands, who fervently believes that the free market should make better men and women of us all, it must be disturbing to see the cynicism, selfishness and greed which the policies of her Government have released in practice. The City today is not a pretty sight, and the late Member for Anglesey is an apt symbol of Mrs Thatcher's Britain. She herself undoubtedly deplores illegality, even in the pursuit of wealth, but the widespread sense

that Keith Best is the natural child of her philosophy poses probably the greatest threat to its continued public acceptance.

Finally, there is the morality of Mrs Thatcher herself. This is the subject of Tam Dalyell's remarkable and important book. Couched in the most solemn language he can muster, it is a violent indictment of her record of personal truthfulness on six episodes since 1982: the Belgrano, Westland, Libya, the miners' strike, Zircan and the Peter Wright affair. Dalyell's point is not essentially to show that she was politically wrong on the merits of any of these episodes, but that on every one of them she lied, deliberately, to conceal her actions. He points to a consistent pattern, which is very difficult to refute, of dishonesty and deception whenever she has been caught in a tight spot. Dalyell thinks this pattern of behaviour important, and it does him credit: it goes to the very heart of democratic government in this country. The way the Prime Minister has been able to brazen her way through each successive scandal, and the ridicule and obloquy Dalyell has faced for insisting on treating it as a serious matter, are a devastating testimony to the decline of our public standards and the supine complacency of our system of accountability. No doubt this book will be shrugged off like all his previous accusations by a party and a prime minister for whom winning is all. But there remains a real possibility that sometime after her next triumphant coronation, Mrs Thatcher will eventually be brought down in a welter of revelation and disgrace. If that were to happen Thatcherism would soon follow.

Prefaced by Sir Evan Cope's introduction ("Margaret Thatcher is the greatest leading lady of all time . . ."), Macdonald Daly and Alexander George's compilation *Margaret Thatcher in her Own Words* (184pp. Penguin. £2.50. 0 14 010461 5) is a selection of the Prime Minister's pronouncements on favourite subjects – unemployment: "I couldn't live without work. That's what makes me so sympathetic to these people who are unemployed. I don't know how they live without working." The economy: "I want the successful people here. That is the sort of economy I am building: not an onerous society, but a go-getter society." Defence: [Trident] "I do not recognize a moral case against it" and, last March, "I am certain that we will win the general election with a good majority."

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John Campbell

Leaders under constraint

Robert Skidelsky

BERNARD DONOUGHUE
Prime Minister: The conduct of policy under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, 1974-9 192pp. Cape. £10.95.

The premierships of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan, spanning the years 1974 to 1979, are of exceptional historical and political interest, not for their achievements, but for their fruits: the birth of the Social Democratic Party, the rebirth of Conservatism, and a decline of the Labour movement which may well be permanent. Bernard (now Lord) Donoughue's "selective view from the top" is thus highly opportune, for this election is still as much about the failures of Wilson and Callaghan as about the record of Mrs Thatcher. A distinguished political scientist, Donoughue joined Wilson's team of personal advisers in 1973. When the Labour Party unexpectedly returned to office following the general election of February 1974, he became the Prime Minister's chief policy adviser and head of a new Downing Street Policy Unit. This innovation had been strongly urged by Wilson's political secretary, Marcia Williams, who wanted to arm Labour prime ministers with expert knowledge to resist reactionary advice from the permanent civil service. Donoughue and his Unit continued to serve James Callaghan, who succeeded Wilson as prime minister in March 1976. Mrs Thatcher has maintained the Unit, though of course under different management.

In a sense Donoughue has little new to tell. Both prime ministers have written their own accounts. Barbara Castle has published her diaries. Among other books, Phillip Whitehead's *The Writing on the Wall* (1985) relied heavily on Donoughue's recollections of his time at No 10. So the main happenings of this traumatic period have been thoroughly aired - the appalling drift of Wilson's first year when pay settlements and government spending spiralled upwards out of control, the voluntary pay policy agreed with the TUC in July 1975, the sterling crisis of 1976 and the negotiation of the IMF loan in December, and the final "winter of discontent" of 1978-9, with the public-service unions on the rampage. What Donoughue offers is a thoughtful, well-written essay on policy-making under Wilson and Callaghan, with special emphasis on the role of the two prime ministers. Though tending towards the smooth, his book is enlivened by caustic asides, chiefly at the expense of Tony Benn and rapacious trade-union officials. If Donoughue fails to get to the heart of what went wrong during these years, so that we are left puzzled by the violence of the political sea-change which followed, the failure is common to his generation of political scientists. They failed to see that the problem lay in the nature of the Labour Party, rather than in the machinery of government.

Donoughue's starting point is the thesis of the late Richard Crossman that Cabinet government was evolving into prime ministerial, or even presidential, government. Crossman's argument was that the modern British prime minister has acquired so much power, authority and patronage that the Cabinet had become a mere rubber-stamp - a "dignified" part of the Constitution, like the Monarchy and Parliament. Donoughue's rejoinder is that "for much of the five and a half years during which I served in Downing Street I was more aware of the constraints on, than the massive impact of, prime ministerial power".

One such constraint is the personality of the prime minister. Neither Wilson nor Callaghan was a "presidential" prime minister. Wilson (unlike in the 1960s) was by 1974 too bored, and his Cabinet too illustrious, for him to be a dominating prime minister. Also (though Donoughue does not mention this), his political standing in the Labour Party and the country was much lower than it had been ten years earlier. James Callaghan was a much more forceful prime minister, but he lacked the authority which comes from winning an election; and he believed in Cabinet government. Donoughue shows that until his stamina and resilience broke down in the winter of 1978-9 he got his policies through Cabinet by giving a strong lead to collective discussion. I must con-

cess I have always found the debate generated by the "presidential" thesis rather boring. The British prime minister is not directly elected like the American or French president; nor are there specific powers attaching to the office, independent of Parliament. The power and authority of the prime minister wax and wane with the personality of the incumbent and the success or failure of policy. That's about all there is to say.

The constraint which most interests Donoughue - where Donoughue, so to speak, comes into the story - is structural. The prime minister has to work through a Whitehall machine based on the obsolete assumption that policy is made in the departments, with the prime minister's role simply that of a co-ordinator. As a consequence the prime minister lacks a permanent office of his own, one dedicated to serving him. Wilson's Policy Unit was the latest in a long series of attempts to increase prime ministerial fire-power. Together with a parallel system of political advisers attached to ministers, it was introduced in an effort to make Whitehall more responsive to Labour's manifesto, which it was assumed that the Prime Minister, as well as other members of his government, were serious about carrying out. Donoughue's stories of the efforts of these temporary civil servants to insert themselves into Whitehall working arrangements hallowed by time are sometimes as comic as any in *Yes, Minister*. Nevertheless, Donoughue claims that his Policy Unit of seven to ten experts "increased the Prime Minister's capacity for effective intervention in other Ministers' policy areas".

How valid is this claim? In her diaries Barbara Castle (writing admittedly only of the period up to 1976) says that Donoughue was "ineffective" and his Unit of no importance. Understandably the author of this book does not share her assessment. He argues that on two occasions the Policy Unit scored decisively - in both cases against the Treasury, and on matters of central importance. In July 1975 Donoughue managed to dissuade Harold Wil-

High reality

Tony Gould

IAN JACK
Before the Oil Ran Out: Britain 1977-86 271pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95. 0-436-22020-2

If I were a teacher on a journalism course and had to select a single article to serve as a model of professional practice I would unhesitatingly recommend Ian Jack's "A Severed Head", an account of Ray Honeyford and the Bradford school saga, which is included in *Before the Oil Ran Out*, a selection of his pieces over the past decade. Before he went to Bradford, Jack admits, he took the view which was widely propagated in the media that Honeyford was "the victim of a curious alliance between the radical Left and far-from-radical Islamic fundamentalism on whom the label 'racist' had been hung to foreclose debate". He interviewed Honeyford and puts his case sympathetically so that the reader feels the justice of his cause. He exposes the muddled thinking on the other side and the absurdity of some of the views expressed on the picket line outside Honeyford's school. Then, just as one starts to feel indignant on Honeyford's behalf, he changes tack and reports what he has learned from "a week in Bradford".

He finds that none of the Asian families he talked to used the word "racist" to describe Honeyford; that they were quite as keen as Honeyford himself on "good sound education for their children with a moral and spiritual content and the three Rs"; but still they did not like Honeyford - why?

The answer, briefly, is that while Honeyford's views, *au fond*, are perfectly respectable and worthy of debate, his manner of expressing them, the tone he adopts in articles written for publication, has been unnecessarily provocative. "I don't know if he's a racist or not", the president of the Council for Mosques tells Jack, "but the smell I get from him is hate". While Jack is scrupulously fair to Honeyford,

son, at the last moment, from being "bounced" by the Treasury into declaring a statutory incomes policy. Instead a voluntary policy, laying down a flat-rate £6 norm for wage increases, was agreed with the TUC, and proved very successful over two years in reducing inflation to single figures. (This policy, incidentally, was the brainchild of the Policy Unit, not of Jack Jones of the Transport Workers.) The other occasion, when Donoughue may have prevented the Treasury slipping a fast one on a sick Callaghan, was at the time of the IMF crisis in December 1976. The Treasury had been left to draft the Letter of Intent to the IMF, setting out Britain's acceptance of certain conditions attached to its loan. Donoughue got suspicious when the draft of the letter apparently failed to arrive at No 10 before he was due to leave for the weekend: he was told it had been held up by "typing problems". Alerted by a helpful civil servant, he finally discovered it in a small special box being prepared for the PM's weekend reading. It was "much tougher" than what Callaghan and the Cabinet had agreed with the IMF. Donoughue and Gavyn Davies, an economist attached to the Unit, worked all weekend at No 10 redrafting the letter, while Callaghan, in bed with bronchitis, roared the drafts down the telephone to Denis Healey, the Chancellor.

In other areas, the Unit seems to have made little impact. Despite prime ministerial support, it failed to persuade either Anthony Crosland or Peter Shore, the ministers responsible, to accept the principle of giving council tenants the right to buy their homes - an election winner for Mrs Thatcher. Callaghan spoke to an amended Policy Unit draft when he launched the debate on the "quality of education" at Ruskin College in October 1976. But it was left to Sir Keith Joseph to take action. Papers poured out on Northern Ireland, the legal, medical and engineering professions, the City, broadcasting, publishing law, the press, and the gambling laws; all apparently to little effect. The Policy Unit was impotent during the "winter of discontent".

he stands aloof from the media chorus that would have us believe Honeyford is more sinned against than sinning.

I have dwelt at some length on this one article because, though it is less exotic, both in content and location, than some of the other pieces in this book, it epitomizes Ian Jack's qualities as a journalist: he is both fair-minded and tough-minded, as well as an elegant writer, and he has an illuminating sense of history. He is also amusing, whether he is hobnobbing with the Bright Young Things in Oxford, conducting a sticky interview with a miserly (both with words for which he wasn't getting paid and with hospitality) eighty-eight-year-old J. B. Priestley, or simply tagging along in the wake of the film-maker David Lean's white Mercedes in a southern India less than wholly enamoured of a re-enactment of imperialism.

Race and class: these are the subjects which inform the writings of this least sociological (in the popular sense of heavy-going and jargon-ridden) of writers. In both these areas Jack is unusually well placed, if one may put it like that. His wife is Indian and his background is Scottish and, I was going to say, working-class. But that brings me to the one new piece of writing here, a fifty-page essay on his father and his childhood with which the book begins.

Length alone puts this in a different category from the articles collected here, as does the fact that it was written specially for the book. It is a deeply felt and subtly constructed memoir. I have only one reservation and that concerns a matter of interpretation. In his article on "Liverpool v Turin", written in the aftermath of the Brussels European Cup final in which events off the field turned what should have been a joyous occasion into a hideous nightmare, Jack writes of "the claustrophobic prison house of English social class". The key word here is "English", because when he comes to write of his own Scottish childhood, Jack only reluctantly categorizes it as "working-class". He explains this by saying that, though there was class feeling which his father shared, "an older moral force" generated the most

The Policy Unit was certainly a worthwhile innovation. But in truth the analysis which led to its setting up was flawed. The problem was not to get Labour policies through the Whitehall machine by invoking prime ministerial power, but to get the Labour Party to abandon the policies large sections of it believed in. Wilson took office in 1974 with commitments which were inconsistent not only with the situation created by the OPEC price hike, but with the survival of the private enterprise system. He did not believe in them, but they were forced on him by the Left and by the trade unions.

His first year in office was spent on purely party business: emasculating Tony Benn's industrial policy, fobbing off the anti-EEC lobby with a referendum and re-negotiation of terms, buying off the trade unions. The education of his party to the realities of power required letting the economic situation deteriorate to the point when pay policy and public-expenditure cuts could be sold as being dictated by external events. The resulting anger and frustration in the Labour movement exploded in 1978 when the TUC torpedoed both Callaghan's pay policy and the democratic socialist approach to governing Britain. The onslaught was led by the public-sector unions which had been the particular object of the Government's solicitude. Callaghan was a strong prime minister: he was destroyed by his party, not by Whitehall.

He was also, ironically, destroyed by an electoral system which failed to deliver a Parliament capable of supporting him. Six million Liberal voters were effectively disenfranchised in February 1974. Under proportional representation the Liberals would have had 150 parliamentary seats instead of fourteen, compared to 246 for the Tories and 241 for Labour. The pattern of government from 1974 to 1979 would, in that situation, have been vastly different; and so would the politics of the 1980s. These were the real constraints on prime ministerial power in the Wilson and Callaghan years, only fitfully glimpsed in this book.

genuine heat in him, and the class conflict as most often heard it expressed was not so much between classes as internal to each of them: it was 'docent folk' versus the rest."

I find this distinction between Scottish and English working-class experience a spurious one, which Jack himself would be quick to spot. If it had been perpetrated by someone else. The internal class conflict he attributes to the "embers of Calvinism" in Scotland has been just as much a feature of English working-class life. Think of Ray Gosling's marvellous evocation of his Northampton childhood in *Sum Total* (published as long ago as 1962 when Gosling himself was scarcely out of his teens).

Ray Gosling, indeed, is the writer who comes most frequently to mind as one reads Ian Jack's essays. Both are admirable commentators on the state of Britain (and abroad, for that matter); both are fascinated by railways; both have an eye for the quirky and the homely, whether it be old Mr Teague in a Cotswolds almshouse who welcomes modern times because they are "sexier" than the old days, or the enthusiast who buys a second home in order to house his massive Meccano constructions, or again the men for whom scavenging in the Birkenhead rubbish tips has become a way of life; and finally both believe that, as Ian Jack puts it in what amounts to an epilogue to this collection, his "1986 Diary", there is plenty of evidence to seal "the case against many writers of English fiction who live in their novels, plays and films, to describe the condition of England by heightening its reality. They are wasting valuable imaginations. The reality of England is already high enough; just getting it right in simple documentary terms should earn any writer the Prix Goncourt".

I don't know about the Prix Goncourt, but Ian Jack certainly deserved Granada Television's Journalist of the Year Award, which he won last year. His book will take its place on the shelf beside not just *Sum Total* but also René Cuthforth's *Order to View*, another journalistic collection which may be considered a work of art.

Access to the goods

Nell MacCormick on what he calls "as significant a new statement of liberal principles as anything since Mill's *On Liberty*"

JOSEPH RAZ
The Morality of Freedom
435pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35. 019247279

Liberalism has a strange persistence. Denounced a thousand times for incoherence and internal contradictions, pilloried ten thousand times for parading the ethic or interest of the bourgeoisie as universal principle, yet eleven thousand and one times it comes back. Not always in the same form; not ever in the same form, indeed. Perhaps any creed whose special point is that each should work it out for himself or herself has to have as many versions as proponents. Inevitably, its opponents respond gleefully showing how any one version contradicts some other. The usual form this takes is the construction of some ideal typical conglomerate from two or more liberal theories, coupled with triumphant demonstration that the conglomerate is shot through with contradiction. This can further be inferred to be necessary given the structure ascribed to liberal society and its inevitable breach of ("contradiction of") some one or more of the conglomerant principles.

Another often exploited source of contradiction can be found in some liberals' theory of value. If there is a plurality of different kinds or forms of good, of such a kind that different goods are incommensurable, and of such a kind that the realization of any one of them can sometimes compete with the realization of another, then any theory which is faithful to the goods it seeks to depict will be capable of being damned as containing contradictory elements. That a sound theory of the good has to be thus vulnerable may pass unnoticed by the denouncers. A softer target is the value-relativism held by some liberals, and sometimes ascribed to all. Where that is represented as itself a compelling or objective reason for tolerance or liberty, the contradiction is obvious. But that fallacy need not affect pluralist theories of value.

It is, however, an untenable individualism which is seen as the primary vice of liberalism. Liberalism is derided alternately as being the theory that society is a simple aggregation or "concatenation" of pre-formed persons, or as being the theory that nothing is purely and unadvisedly good save the subjective state of some individual (so that all social goods are resolvable without residue into some combination of individual goods). If it has to be such a theory, it fully earns the derision. For of course it is a matter of social achievement to develop social institutions in which individuals count for something; and what individuals count for is in turn explicable or statable only in social terms, not in some ineffably private language.

So the search should be eager for (i) a convincingly non-individualistic statement of liberal doctrine which (ii) accounts for the special importance of admitting rival statements of its own doctrine and (iii) explains in clear terms the nature of incommensurability among a plurality of genuine goods. The good and the bad news (bad both for those who wanted this to be impossible and for those who wanted to be first with such a theory themselves) is that Joseph Raz has produced the very book. The search is already over. At least the main part of it is done. Raz's *Morality of Freedom* is as significant a new statement of liberal principles as anything since Mill's *On Liberty*.

Autonomy is the core of Raz's doctrine. His conception of autonomy is that of a person's being able to shape and plan a life of his or her own in such a way that a meaningful judgment can be made of success or failure, total or partial, in such a person's projects and designs. One's life is judgeable as more or less a success in being the life one tried to make it be. One's sense of achievement and indeed of happiness is bound up with how good a go one has made of one's own thing - not that this is a matter of any kind of absolute success or failure. Why autonomy matters, and why there are real choices to be made in a life, is precisely because more than any other, genuinely worthwhile way of life exists, none being better by all possible standards of judgment than any other. The more a society chooses to promote a variety of ways of life, the more possibilities of a worth-

while life there are. But these are not fully commensurable. Here lies at least a part of the case for value-pluralism and incommensurability. The whole story is intriguingly argued by Raz as part of his critique of utilitarianism.

Autonomy understood in such terms is "positive freedom": the capability for and exercise of personal self-government. Political liberty, the setting of limits on state power and public authority, is in the main negative liberty no doubt. But the autonomy or positive liberty it can secure is what makes sense of civil liberty as a (derivative) value and guides us towards deciding which sectors of liberty are worthy to be cherished and secured as rights. This, according to Raz, shows us why the liberty to speak one's mind or to choose one's career is of a different order from the freedom to choose different flavours of ice-cream, pleasing though the latter may be.

It also backs up the idea that there are certain positive services to which, under liberal principles, one has, and should be acknowledged to have, rights. Education, for example, is as necessary a condition of one's chance of autonomy as is freedom from servile constraints. On this account, indeed, Raz propounds the view that the harms which Mill's harm principle properly embraces are all and only those assaults and interferences which diminish autonomy; accordingly he reads failure to provide autonomy-conditioning services as also a species of harm for the purpose of the principle. To my mind, this goes rather beyond any reasonable reading of the term "harm"; but that hardly matters if the autonomy thesis does genuinely justify both a clearly defined harm principle and a principle about rights to positive services as essential supports to one's autonomy. And surely it does.

As the foregoing makes clear, Raz's line on "harm" evades a standard objection to the Millian approach. The claims that "harm" is an amoral or morally neutral concept, and that the restriction of public coercion to the prevention of harm is thus a morally neutral policy, are obviously untenable. But they are simply abandoned by Raz. His is (in the misleading current jargon) a "perfectionist" doctrine. That is, it candidly acknowledges itself as grounded in a moral theory about the good life for human beings. Autonomy is of the essence of the good life, and autonomy is self-government in the pursuit of what makes a life good. Harm is whatever seriously and substantially injures that pursuit or one's capacity to engage

in it. There is no claim that liberalism requires what I call "moral disestablishment"; only that the establishment permitted is minimal in scope.

Autonomy, moreover, is by no means a purely individualistic achievement. To value autonomy is to view individual lives as special in value, but it is to value also an essentially societal achievement. For the circumstances in which individuals can possibly live autonomous lives are social ones, and the worthwhile opportunities which have to exist to make autonomy real can exist only in certain types of social formation. To promote the conditions of autonomy is to promote a good. But it is essentially a public or collective good. No one can enjoy these conditions except when they are available generally, even if not universally. Accordingly, liberalism grounded in autonomy is not a morally individualistic creed. This point depends indeed on Raz's definition of moral individualism as "the doctrine that only states of individual human beings, or aspects of their lives, can be intrinsically good or valuable". None the worse for that. Not the least valuable aspects of the book are this concise definition of a slippery term and the eradication of some of the fallacies it invites.

In passing, one might here remark that the analytical style of Raz's current work as exhibited in the treatment of concepts such as individualism, autonomy or freedom itself shows a clean break from the post-war Oxford style of linguistic analysis. No claim is made to be producing or reproducing the usages of ordinary language; nor does anything turn on what "we" mean by this or that. It is candidly accepted that there are here no value-neutral definitions of terms such that, having set up the definition, one can proceed independently to decide whether what it defines is good, bad or indifferent; rather, to define is to theorize; to propose an understanding of the idea as it is to be defended or supported or, I suppose, attacked. What Ronald Dworkin calls the "semantic sting" is drawn; practical concepts are all interpreted at heart, and we have to define our principles in defining them. This line of approach, on which a good deal of current work in the liberal and social democratic traditions seems lately to have been converging, is surely a sound and welcome one. Even so, it poses new problems as to the interrelations of descriptive and prescriptive work, and these will have to be thought out anew.

The point of Raz's practical principles is to propose political liberty, not as instrumental to some radically other good, as Mill himself did in advocating free speech for the contribution

it makes to truth and its revelation, but rather as intrinsic to autonomy and to the conditions of autonomy. The conditions of autonomy are in their essence public goods, and intrinsic to them is the ability of persons and parties freely to advance and propose political ideals. This, together with the new analytical approach, entails that there is no single monolithic "liberalism", which is a composite of all liberal theories, classical, neo-classical, social democratic, or whatever. Rather there is a tradition or family of traditions in political thought, of which one's own work may be put forward as an interpretation and restatement (or a critique). Internal contradiction is a vice in any version of liberal theory, but can hardly be ascribed to the tradition as a whole.

The fact that there are disputes or debates among representatives of a tradition cannot be thought a vice in any theory which treats independence of mind as a virtue. Ideas should be winnowed in debate. Doubtless many of the critics who find liberalism self-contradictory also favour debate. It is they who have to look out for their own risks of self-contradiction.

There are points both minor and major on which it would be possible to enter disputes or debates with Raz. Trivially, I am glad when he cites me, but less so when one book is twice mis-cited under two different wrong names, once as source of a paper not printed in that conjectural volume. Again, the doctrine of "novus acutus interruptus" seems a novelty; *colitis intervensiens* is its cousin in misconception, I suppose. More substantially, Raz's doctrine of authority as the ability peremptorily to change a person's reasons for action seems to me wrong, for the same reason as it is erroneous to think of norms as reasons for action in themselves. A legal authority is one which can determine conclusively or defeasibly what is legally wrong or right. In so far as I have reason to act legally, such a determination then affects what I have reason to do. But not because reasons are somehow manufacturable from thin air.

Most substantially, although Raz has a beautiful and lucid analysis of equality among persons, he has too little warmth for it as an ideal. Differential access to the goods of life may or may not betoken inequality of respect for persons. But where it does, it is on that account alone an evil. There is more to be said for Dworkinian equality of respect than Raz allows. Still, that these and other weighty points of debate arise from this book is not surprising. Since it both takes and favours an independent line it is twice over a book of independent mind.

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The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, England

Joseph Raz

Has the Welfare State gone wrong?

Adrian Wooldridge

DOUGLAS E. ASHFORD
The Emergence of the Welfare State
352pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.
0631152113
MALCOLM WICKS
A Future for All: Do we need the welfare state?
301pp. Penguin. Paperback. £3.95.
0140224114

Forty years ago the Welfare State excited widespread enthusiasm. The war strengthened demands for a more just and generous social order, administered by the State and devoted to popular welfare; common sacrifices deserved common securities. The Beveridge Report named "five giant evils to be destroyed—Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness"—and the intelligentsia applauded and extended its recommendations. Enthusiasm was not confined to the Left. The three pillars of the Welfare State—the Education Act, the National Insurance Act and the National Health Service Act—were associated with the names of Butler, Beveridge and Bevan: a Conservative, a Liberal and a Socialist. Like warfare, Welfare was above class politics.

This consensus has recently been subjected to several damaging assaults. First, it has repeatedly been demonstrated that the middle classes do remarkably well out of the Welfare State. They staff many of its departments and are its most successful customers, assiduous in using its services and claiming its benefits. They are highly successful in the competition for scarce educational resources. The expansion of higher education in the 1960s produced subsidies for the affluent rather than opportunities for the poor; the class composition of university students remains almost the same today as it was in the 1920s. Through student grants the State essentially subsidizes middle-class people in their pursuit of middle-class jobs. Indeed, the Welfare State has often seemed to be more successful at providing jobs for administrators than services for the poor. In 1980 Britain employed 5.3 million public servants, as compared with 3.6 million in West Germany and 3.1 million in France. The Inland Revenue employed almost the same number of people as the American Federal tax system. The educational system employed 717,000 non-teaching staff in 1979 as compared with 398,000 in 1965. Medical expenditure often seems to advance the interests of medical practitioners and scientists rather than patients. State-funded architecture and town planning often seem to be a conspiracy of professionals against their clients.

Second, the Welfare State has failed to eliminate many of the problems it was set up to tackle. Primary poverty persisted throughout the 1960s, particularly among one-parent families. Tawney's prediction that under a Welfare State it "would cease to be the rule for the rich to be rewarded, not only with riches, but with a preferential share of health and life, and for the penalty of the poor to be not merely poverty, but ignorance, sickness and premature death" has proved an empty one. Enormous inequalities persist between the health of the rich and of the poor. In 1980 the risk of death before retirement was seven-and-a-half times as great for unskilled manual workers and their wives as for professional men and their wives. The Black Report argued that inequality in health has actually widened under the National Health Service. The poor continued to do extremely badly in the educational system and increased expenditure did little to compensate for disadvantages rooted in home-backgrounds. In particular, the Welfare State has done remarkably little to reduce British social inequalities. The bottom 50 per cent of the population received 27.3 per cent of all gross income in 1949 but only 23.5 per cent in 1970/71. Progressive taxation has had little impact on the fortunes of the rich. The top 10 per cent received 27.1 per cent of post-tax income in 1949 and 23.9 per cent in 1970/71. In 1972 the top 20 per cent of the population still owned 85 per cent of all British wealth. The main post-war redistribution in wealth has not been between the rich and the poor but between the very rich and the rich.

Third, the Welfare State has imposed enormous burdens on the economy. Beveridge had

estimated that there would be no real increase in the cost of health and rehabilitation services between 1945 and 1965, "it being assumed that there will actually be some development of the service, and as a consequence of this development a reduction in the number of cases requiring it". In fact, spending rose astronomically. By the mid-1970s 46.5 per cent of all GDP was devoted to public expenditure, much of it to welfare. This led to widespread reassessment of the relationship between public expenditure and economic growth. In the 1960s it had been assumed that the social services were essential to a vigorous and sophisticated economy; in the 1970s many commentators presented them as antagonistic to growth, drawing resources from the productive sector of the economy, reducing incentives and curbing initiatives. Bacon and Walter Eltis, for example, claimed that the public sector was absorbing too many resources, starving the private sector and damaging productivity. Milton Friedman suggested that paternalistic welfare programmes "weaken the family; reduce the incentive to work, save and innovate; reduce the accumulation of tax and limit our freedom". To many it seemed that the unchecked Welfare State was capable of smothering the affluent society.

Fourth, the complexity of the welfare system has led to widespread dissatisfaction. Barbara Wootton has well remarked that "Giant Complexity" should be added to Beveridge's Five Giant Evils. A bewildering large number of benefits have been introduced by different government departments to support poor families. There are over a hundred DHSS leaflets on social security provision—and one of these is a leaflet that lists all the other leaflets. In consequence, large numbers of eligible people fail to claim such entitlements as supplementary benefits, free school meals, rate

rebates, rent allowances and free prescriptions. In 1979 only 55 per cent of eligible persons claimed rent allowances and only 60 per cent free school meals.

Fifth, several right-wing economists have suggested that the competitive market would be more efficient at providing welfare services than the monopolistic State. The provision of so-called "free" welfare services, they argue, denies citizens the freedom of choice they enjoy as consumers in the competitive market and forces them to put up with inferior products. "Most families are already paying indirectly for all the welfare services they consume", the Institute of Economic Affairs has remarked. "What possible objection can there be to bringing this payment into the open by direct charging for schooling, hospitals, G.P.s and the rest?"

Finally, some American neo-conservatives have argued that the Welfare State is positively counterproductive. Charles Murray's influential study *Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980* (1984) suggests that welfare legislation has created adverse incentives and undermined individual responsibility. The explosion of expenditure on job training, food stamps, and welfare has reversed progress made in the 1950s and early 1960s and made matters worse for America's poor and minorities, its supposed beneficiaries. Welfare payments, the argument runs, persuade the poor to make short-term decisions which have disastrous long-term consequences: by making it more attractive for them to drop out of school, abandon low-paid jobs and have illegitimate children, benefits tempt them into a Faustian bargain with the State which keeps them permanently dependent. "We tried to do more for the poor and produced more poor instead", Murray argues. "We have tried to remove the

barriers to escape from poverty, and inadvertently built a trap." He speculates that the best way to help the poor may be to scrap much of the welfare system for those of working age—this is the Alexandrian solution: "cut the knot, for there is no way to untie it".

The Conservative Party has been quick to exploit such arguments. Sir Keith Joseph has stated that "it is clear that the middle ground way was not a secure base but a slippery slope to socialism and state control". Margaret Thatcher has boasted that "amidst our well publicized difficulties a vital new debate is beginning, or perhaps an old debate is being renewed, about the proper role of government, the welfare state and the attitudes on which it rests".

Douglas E. Ashford's *The Emergence of the Welfare State* is a major contribution to this "vital new debate", although not one of which the Prime Minister would approve. Based on a formidable body of secondary literature, illustrated from a well-chosen selection of primary documents, and concerned with the development of the welfare state not only in Britain but also in France, Germany, Sweden and the United States, it is an impressive achievement, and will be a valuable resource for anyone seriously concerned with modern social policy. Ashford's argument is comparative throughout, but perhaps his most interesting insights are into the weaknesses of the British Welfare State.

He ascribes many of these weaknesses to the limited imaginations of the late Victorian and Edwardian intelligentsia. Political philosophers such as T. H. Green, Leslie Stephen and Leonard Hobhouse tried to reconcile liberalism with the demands of a more collectivist age. They continued to understand social problems in terms of individual morality and to worry about the impact of social reforms on the characters of the poor. Hobhouse argued that in an ideal society "idleness would be regarded as a social pest, to be stamped out like crime" and the young Beveridge advocated "complete and permanent loss of all citizenship rights" for the poor, through public institutions, emigration and even starvation. They habitually divided the world between those who did good and those to whom good was done. Like John Toynbee, they regretted suffering but never questioned the system that produced it. Their comfortable position in English life and their links with the political élite dissuaded them from original thought and encouraged a complacent belief in social engineering. Social investigators sacrificed intellectual rigour for empirical certainty and policy-makers exchanged public debate for political expediency.

Even the political ferment of the Edwardian period failed to produce many intellectual breakthroughs. The Labour Party was remarkably unoriginal in its social thought. The Webbs, who generated a plethora of ideas, still regarded the "reform of social conditions as a palliative for original sin" and had little sympathy for the working class; they preferred state paternalism and administrative centralization to airy-fairy concepts of social solidarity. Political stability and social elitism continued to allow policy-makers to avoid fundamental moral and social problems. Lacking both popular support and political coherence, welfare legislation all too frequently embodied outmoded assumptions. "Britain somehow managed to do new things", Ashford argues, "but always in the same way."

In contrast, the French intelligentsia rapidly grasped the distinction between the liberal and the Welfare State. The revolutionary tradition predisposed them to regard the State as a vehicle for individual welfare. The Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1793, for example, stipulated that "public assistance is a sacred debt. Societies owe subsistence to unfortunate citizens whether by finding them work or by assuring them the means to exist without work."

Nineteenth-century *laissez-faire* thought did remarkably little to smother this tradition, and liberals continued to assume that collective authority required a higher justification than the maximizing of individual utilities.

Social thought in France attained a level of sophistication unequalled in England. In particular, the École Normale Supérieure encouraged serious social thought, cultivated links with the political élite and exercised a pervasive

influence on the national educational system. "Unlike the individually-sponsored and discreetly privileged products of Jowett's Balliol", Ashford argues, "the normaliens were intimately involved in reshaping French political thinking, in translating new ideas into workable education programmes and in providing a new philosophical justification for democracy." Durkheim and others presented *laissez-faire* liberalism as anathema to social solidarity. They argued that limits needed to be placed on economic inequality; that the state needed to provide security for the working class; and that only a *liberalisme réformiste*, based on a *sociologie réformiste*, could enhance individual capabilities while preserving social solidarity. Republicans, liberals and socialists alike agreed that the State had a social obligation to its citizens. The French consequently linked social legislation to a developing concept of a democratic State. They may have been slower than the British in providing welfare, but they built on more solid foundations.

How were ideas about social policy, whether vulgar or sophisticated, translated into practice? Ashford suggests that many of the most important innovations took place between the wars, principally under Conservative governments. The main obstacles to the nationalization of social policy were swept aside: traditional charitable assistance failed to deal with mass unemployment; private insurers faced severe financial strains and were eager to offload unprofitable risks on to the State; professional groups were gradually co-opted into national social security programmes; and the agricultural sector was brought under State protection. The State rapidly increased its capacity to spend money, employ service staff and subordinate local government. In Britain the number of social service employees doubled between 1914 and 1933 and quadrupled between 1933 and 1940; between 1930 and 1950 about half of all public funds were spent on social services. At the same time, the Left learned to work within the parliamentary system and began to see how social legislation could be used to advance its political aims.

Ashford suggests that the fragility of the British Welfare State is in large part due to compromises made during these years. The problem of land ownership was all but ignored in political discussion. The Friendly Societies blamed Labour Party enthusiasm for social insurance and limited working-class involvement in new legislation. Private insurance companies exploited the political system to preserve their independence. The inadequate Poor Law machinery survived intact until 1948. These compromises resulted partly from the indifference of politicians and the strength of the Civil Service. Few politicians took a lively interest in wage policy and labour relations: Churchill was not peculiar in preferring the dampening of grand strategy to the gruel of social legislation. The Labour Party's proposals for the relief of mass unemployment did little more than reiterate Edwardian recommendations. The Civil Service was responsible for the bulk of policy innovations and the Treasury acquired enormous power over the social insurance system, playing a more direct role in shaping social policy than finance ministries in any other advanced country.

British trade unions took little part in social reforms. They chose to pursue their ends through parliamentary politics, but the political élite did its best to ignore them. Few ministers consulted them. The trade unions' preoccupation with industrial conflicts distracted them from consideration of the long-term reform of the State; union barons spent more time squabbling among themselves than they did thinking about social benefits. In consequence, wages were never linked to welfare as they were in other European countries.

The post-war British State was consequently a bureaucratic product. Richard Titmuss talked eloquently of the "war-warmed impulse of people for a more generous society"; but policy-making remained the province of hard-headed administrators. Aides agreed with Churchill that the war was Britain's main priority and argued that the Labour Party "should not try to get socialist measures implemented under the guise of winning the war". Beveridge established almost autocratic control over the

and sluggish administrative machine, but Ashford finds his social thought unoriginal, unimaginative and unsympathetic. His plan, as he admitted, "stemmed from what all of us had imbibed from the Webbs", and his assumptions were often harsh. He wanted to create a "safety-net" for the poor, not a new type of State. He continued to worry about weakening the incentive to work and undermining voluntary assistance.

In the event, even Beveridge's modest proposals were vigorously contested. Worried that increased taxes would extinguish economic growth, the Treasury lamented the loss of the Poor Law threat of prison for the unemployed and the ease of obtaining unemployment insurance, and objected to what it saw as excessively high child-benefits. In 1944 it estimated that social spending in 1945 would be £450 million, rising to £831 million in 1965. Popular enthusiasm for the Beveridge Report undermined Treasury influence but failed to convert policy-makers to a radical vision of future social policy. Even the National Health Service, the centrepiece of the Welfare State, was weakened by compromises: medical specialists and their teaching and research hospitals were insulated from the national system, family doctors preserved their professional autonomy, and health-care centres were more or less abandoned. Despite their fragmented political system, the French did much better, linking expanded welfare provision to a popular commitment to social solidarity.

The British Welfare State, according to Ashford, was flawed from the start. The expansion of the State was not accompanied by any serious re-examination of its constitutional and political foundations. Policy-making was characterized by Machiavellianism and an institutional narcissism which smothered original thinking. Its tone was highly paternalistic: "In the case of nutrition and health, just as in the case of education," Douglas Jay wrote in 1947, "the gentleman in Whitehall really does know better what is good for people than the people know themselves." Even the high priest of social welfare, Titmuss, assumed that "a small élite in a totally mobilized society could determine social and economic policies without the distractions, setbacks and inefficiencies of democratic governance". Intellectuals were wedded to evangelical and Benthamite prejudices, and many continued to assume that citizenship rights should be determined by one's ability to avoid pauperism, sloth and intemperance. For the French, on the other hand, "social policies were not simply new governmental functions, but efforts to enhance the participatory vitality of French politics, to create new associational links among French citizens, and to enable the less privileged to become fully active, responsible members of society".

In *A Future for All*, Malcolm Wicks, Labour Party candidate for Croydon North-West, takes up the history of the British Welfare State where Ashford leaves off. (Ashford promises to deal with the period between 1950 and the present in a subsequent volume.) Wicks argues that the New Right has hijacked the Conservative Party; that it has destroyed the post-war consensus and set about dismantling the Welfare State; and that its policies will become more radical and destructive if it wins the next General Election: "we may have seen nothing yet". His prose is vigorous and well informed and, other than in the abominable conclusion, which has evidently been co-written by Dave Spart, he refrains from tedious babble about "savage" cuts, "obscene" policies and "massive" working-class resistance. Having mastered the literature on the subject, he recognizes that the Welfare State has its defects, admitting that it is too remote from the needs of its clients, too often run in the interests of its administrators, and too prone to transfer resources to the middle class. But he insists that the only humane solution to these problems lies in expansion and reform.

Unfortunately, this diagnosis reveals more about the rhetoric of the Left than about the realities of social policy. It rests on a series of exaggerations: of the radicalism of the post-war consensus; of the originality of the New Right; and of the peculiarity of the present government. The idea that the Conservative Party has been re-invigorated by a new philosophy has been widely accepted—by the Left because it likes to feel threatened. But it has little substance. The Conservative Party has praised free enterprise and self-reliance and pilloried state bureaucracy and welfare scrounging throughout the post-war years. Edward Heath made a reputation in the 1960s as an advocate of the free market. The Labour Party has never lost an opportunity to suggest that the Conservatives are plotting to dismantle the Welfare State and unleash market forces. Mrs Thatcher is certainly peculiarly fond of free market rhetoric, but in practice she and her Government have repeatedly accommodated themselves to the demands of the welfare system.

The Government's hostility to increased expenditure on welfare is not peculiar to Conservatives. In 1966 the Labour administration responded to economic pressures with a series of economies, including prescription charges. By 1975 even Anthony Crosland was forced to admit—at a civic lunch—that "the party is over". The Callaghan government lamented the "burden" of taxation and tried to cut public spending. It also tried to encourage the trend towards owner-occupation, describing owning one's own home as "a basic and natural desire" for most people. Other European administrations, of the left as well as the right, have been forced by economic circumstances to prune their expenditure.

In fact, the Government has done less to dismantle the Welfare State than the rhetoric of its supporters and opponents suggests. It has failed dramatically to fulfil its pledge to hold down public spending. The All Party Select Committee on Treasury Affairs calculated that public expenditure increased by 12.3 per cent over the five financial years to 1983/4 and suggested that the Government has understated its spending. Between 1979/80 and 1984/5 real spending rose by 1 per cent on education, 17 per cent on health and personal social services and 28 per cent on social security.

Nor has the Government made any serious attempt to dismantle the National Health Service.

This underlying continuity in the recent history of the British Welfare State is hardly surprising. The practical options available to politicians are limited. The weakness of the British economy will make a return to the generosity of the early 1960s impossible, but the ageing of the population and the problem of structural unemployment will create a mounting demand for basic welfare services. The current debate about the future of the Welfare State is largely a matter of rhetoric. The voters in the election are confronted with a choice between a Conservative Party which boasts about economies but confronts an expanding body of welfare-clients, and opposition parties which promise more generosity but are constrained by an inefficient and deteriorating economy.

Between 1979 and 1983 the number of people the NHS employs increased by 7 per cent, with an 8 per cent increase in medical staff and 11 per cent increase in nursing staff. Increases in prescription charges have indeed been dramatic—they went up by nearly 1,000 per cent between 1979 and 1986—yet about three-quarters of prescriptions remain exempt from charges, and the proportion of NHS funding derived from charges has only risen from 4.4 per cent in 1979/80 to 4.8 per cent in 1985/6. The complaint that the Health Service is in crisis is not supported by figures for expenditure, and may well owe something to the re-allocation of resources away from the acute hospitals in the South-East, which have powerful connections in the media, towards the deprived regions and the Cinderella services.

The Government has also failed to engineer a change in popular attitudes to welfare. In September 1985, a Gallup poll showed that 80 per cent of respondents thought the Government was spending too little on the National Health Service. In February 1985, another poll found that 59 per cent favoured more public expenditure on services, even if it meant higher taxes, and that only 16 per cent wanted to see tax cuts if that meant cutting services.

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John Coile

On both their houses

Jennifer Loach

G. R. ELTON
The Parliament of England, 1559-1581
 399pp. Cambridge University Press. £30.
 0521328357
 D. M. LOADES
The Tudor Court
 272pp. Batsford. £19.95.
 0713438665

Although it is written in Sir Geoffrey Elton's usual brisk and trenchant style, *The Parliament of England, 1559-1581* is a somewhat eerie book. A prime object of the work is to correct the view of Parliament created by Sir John Neale: the result is a dialogue with the dead. There are few pages on which Neale's name does not feature, often in a reproachful footnote, and the whole book rests on an assumption that its readers are fully conversant with his work. Indeed, it cannot be understood unless it is read alongside Neale's two volumes on *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments*: it is ironic that the effect of Elton's efforts is to force students of Parliament to read the writings of Neale.

This book covers the same period as the first of Neale's volumes, but Elton is not writing a second volume. This abstinence is for good and generous reasons, but the result is to leave some questions in the air. Perhaps the most important of these concerns the parliamentary liberty of free speech. (Elton argues convincingly that the only parliamentary "privilege" recognized by contemporaries was that of freedom from arrest: the remainder of what we have too loosely called "privileges", were, in fact, liberties.) The question of whether the principle of free speech extended to the right to initiate discussion on any matter was one crucial to a number of the parliamentary clashes of Elizabeth's reign. As Elton here acknowledges, Elizabeth, by her assertion that matters of state could be introduced only "on behalf of the Queen and with her permission", curtailed Parliament's liberty in an apparently unprecedented manner. However, the great conflicts over this restriction came in the 1580s and later, most notably, of course, over licences and monopolies, and therefore lie outside Elton's scope here.

Still, it is a symptom of a book's value that the reader is left asking for more. This is, and will remain for the foreseeable future, the definitive work on how Parliament functioned in the later sixteenth century. It describes how

business was handled in both Houses, and by the Queen: there are some illuminating pages on Elizabeth's use of the veto, which is seen primarily as a means of forcing warring interest groups into agreement. Elton properly reminds us about expiring laws, and laws being repealed, both of which have usually been ignored by historians of a whiggish cast. Very few problems are left unresolved after this relentless survey. One that is the use of proxies in the Lords, which Elton describes as remaining "full of mystery". He is here able to set out in detail his argument that the procedural developments regarded by Neale as a sign of the growing "maturity" of the House of Commons were both less significant and less systematic than has been thought. In particular, Elton argues that the use of bill committees, on which both Neale and Notestein laid so much stress, remained rare in this period and "was not resorted to if there seemed insufficient doubt about the terms of a bill". The majority of bills were prepared before the session, rather than being drafted in the parliament, and the idea that 1571 saw the origins of a regular committee for grievances is an error: the various attempts of these years to turn the Commons into a body capable of generating legislation from within itself, "interesting though they are", never, Elton claims, "got very far or achieved very much".

Certain categories of bills and acts are examined in depth. Elton's discussion of supply rests on his own view that "everyone accepted that regular peacetime taxation had come to stay and that the ordinary rather than the extraordinary tasks of government obliged the nation to assist the Queen financially", an argument he has sought to prove elsewhere. He is almost certainly correct, yet the fact that Elizabeth's spokesmen always made a great deal of foreign dangers and Scottish threats surely suggests that the notion of the monarch "living off his own" except in times of war still had some appeal. There is a very interesting consideration of the way in which the bill for supply and the Commons' appeal to Elizabeth to marry were intertwined in 1566, although not all readers may be fully convinced by Elton's argument that "money... rather than politics" caused the difficulties of that session.

On bills for the common weal, by far the largest category with which Parliament concerned itself, the book is, predictably, illuminating. It illustrates and proves Elton's theory that most economic - and, indeed, social - measures were not the result of deliberate and

consistent government policy, but rather, "at best, demonstrate official recognition of sectional demands". S. T. Bindoff's elegant analysis of the origins of the Statute of Artificers is here demolished, for Elton shows that the aldermen of York knew before the session began that a bill concerning apprenticeship was to be put before Parliament: he argues that the statute had its origins in the Council initiatives of 1559.

The section on religious bills is disappointing. Elton undoubtedly proves his argument that there was "no concerted puritan programme moved in parliament by a coherent party"; in particular he is here able to expand his attack on Neale's "puritan choir", suggesting in passing that the forty-four members mentioned in the famous pasquill are the members of the 1566 committee for the settlement of the succession. However, the self-denying statement at the beginning of this section that "a really full treatment" of religious matters is unnecessary given the writings of other historians leads to an unbalanced treatment of what the author himself accepts was a highly significant area of parliamentary activity.

This is an austere and scholarly work. By his decision to concentrate on the records of Parliament itself, Elton has deprived his audience of the generally inaccurate but often entertaining information to be found in ambassadors' reports and private correspondence, and the reader - in particular, the young reader - will find *The Parliament of England, 1559-1581* hard going. But the rewards are great.

In his prologue, Elton declares that "prolonged involvement with parliament has in the end convinced me that the customary concentration on it as the centre of public affairs... is entirely misleading". Real power, he believes, lay elsewhere, in the Council or at court. The court has indeed become a focus of attention for early modern historians, but much of their work remains either unpublished or available only in specialized journals. D. M. Loades's book, which he describes as "a portrait of the English court over the period of 140 years from the accession of Edward IV to the death of Elizabeth, its structure, its funding and its way of life", is therefore welcome. It contains a great deal of information, much of it coming from the mid-Tudor period, thirty-one illustrations, and useful lists of royal houses and principal officers of the court. The undergraduate who virtuously seeks to start his essay on the court with a definition of it will not, however, find the answer in *The Tudor Court*.

Spreading complaints

Kevin Sharpe

ESTHER S. COPE
Politics Without Parliaments, 1629-1640
 252pp. Allen and Unwin. £22.
 0049410202

Traditional histories of the 1630s depict the decade of Charles I's personal rule without parliaments as a crucial cause of the Civil War. Clarendon, however, described the decade as a period of the "fullest calm and greatest measure of felicity". Between Puritan polemic and denunciatory speeches in the Long Parliament on the one hand, and royalist panegyric on the other, lies the central question: how did the English people and especially the gentry who governed the shires respond to the enactments and demands of personal rule?

Wisely observing that compliance is not approval and that the vituperation of a few should not be taken as the views of a majority, Esther Cope attempts, from contemporary diaries, letters, speeches and behaviour, to assess responses to the dissolution of Parliament, financial exactions, religious policy, schemes to improve the militia and finally the Scots war. On each subject she contributes valuable information and sound sense. The "silent majority" of *Caroline England*, she observes, cared more for conscientious ministers than about complex doctrinal differences; the lack of access to legislation, she finds, was no serious problem Charles's poor entertainment on the summer progress of 1636, it is interestingly suggested, may have expressed the gentry's disgruntlement.

But Professor Cope's failure to explore her material and suggestions further leaves us asking: how unpopular was the Laudian emphasis on ceremonies? How effective was the programme to improve defences or enforce the Book of Orders? How much resentment was aroused by fiscal exactions and projects? Though final answers are doubtless elusive, Cope's best chapters - on 1629 and 1639 - and best passages, on the dispute over the muster-master's fee for example, show how much we can learn. By contrast, the discussions of knighthood and forest fines, the elections to the Short Parliament, most of all the collection of ship money and rating disputes over it, are disappointingly superficial.

There are larger problems too. By discussing perceptions of and responses to policies without studying the making of policies, *Politics Without Parliaments* fails to show how far Charles innovated and misses the extent to which over some matters the Council was responding to local initiatives and requests rather than offending local sensibilities. By excluding the court and Council, Cope passes over those at Whitehall who shared (and articulated) the misgivings of the country and so mitigated the sense of alienation. An account of the living conditions of the 1630s seems necessary if we are to understand the impact of demands for money and services. More important, her failure to study the instruments of enforcement and the question of censorship makes it difficult to weigh up actions and words. For all the careful balance of Cope's book, its concentration on contentious moments and *causes célèbres* may distort as well as reveal.

Cope concludes that the complaints aired in the 1630s focused on misunderstandings and sought clarifications, and that they posed no real threat to the government; not until 1639, with the Scots war and Scottish propaganda, did grievances and misgivings harden and cohere. But while this seems sound, problems remain: would a fuller explanation of royal intentions have dispelled criticism? And why did the rebellion of the hated northern kingdom fail to excite English loyalism? Because such questions are not answered, the extent to which Charles's campaign was foredoomed, or to which the war created new grievances and gave old ones a new platform, indeed the chronology of England's disillusionment with its monarch, remains unclear. We still need to explain how and why it was that "between the outbreak of the first Bishops' war and the summoning of Parliament... in September 1640 the focus of politics shifted from particular complaints to the condition of England".

Decoding the heavens

Patrick Curry

J. D. NORTH
Horoscopes and History
 232pp. Warburg Institute. Paperback, £26.
 0854810684
 PAOLA ZAMBELLI (Editor)
"Astrologi hallucinati": Stars and the End of the World in Luther's time
 266pp. Berlin: de Gruyter. DM128.
 3110103176

The history of astrology is a backwater, infrequently visited by scholars. Both of the books under review clearly intimate that it could, and should, be something more. In the end, however, and for different reasons, they themselves fail to bear out that promise.

J. D. North's *Horoscopes and History* is one of the Warburg Institute's occasional series of Surveys and Texts. It is a minor jewel - one which, to be fair, is minor only because of the modesty of Professor North's aims. The main one is to examine a century-old intellectual problem, namely, how best to divide the zodiac into twelve (sometimes eight) mundane or "daily houses". Along the way, North succeeds in two wider purposes. The first is to illuminate the transmission of medieval and early modern scientific ideas; the second is to demonstrate the usefulness of astrological data (especially horoscopes) to historians.

Astrologers - including many whom we would tend to describe as philosophers, mathematicians, or scientists - have long wrestled with the complexities of "domification". The problem was not only how to divide the houses, but to systematize and simplify the laborious mathematics involved. (The latter project resulted in tables, with such success that, by the 1630s, Elias Ashmole could calculate a horoscopic figure in only eight to fifteen minutes.)

Their efforts have left behind a confused if stratified mass of different systems, often bearing names that have little to do with their actual founders. That of "Placidus", for example, was devised by Antonio Magini (1555-1617); "Campanus" was certainly not original to the thirteenth-century Italian of that name; and so on. And both of these methods - like that of the German Regiomontanus (1436-76), to which they were commonly opposed - were claimed by their adherents to represent the true (but unfortunately unspecified) intentions of Ptolemy.

With patient attention, North unearths and

clarifies these strands. He sticks fairly closely to the intellectual bones of the story, especially mathematics and astronomy. As these are presented historically, however, the reader becomes aware of other considerations: the astrologers' intellectual valour and integrity, for example. But still more impressive is the web of purely contingent considerations - fashions, chauvinistic promotion of favoured national astrologers and their methods, the availability of some tables and not others, political demands and sheer confusion - that frequently determined what actually happened.

The second part of the book examines historical examples of horoscopes, which North decodes to reveal their authors' sources, abilities and often intentions. In this way, light is cast on such diverse phenomena as the transmission of Arabic mathematics to medieval Europe, and the intrigues of early twelfth-century Norman politics.

Here too, if paradoxically, both rigour and contingency are generally in evidence. As North's book closes, in the late seventeenth century, we are left with the success of astronomical tables, resulting in both the democratization of astrological practice, and a diminished



A Jew holding a Torah scroll, from the "Jerusalem Mishneh Torah", circa 1400 - an illustration from *The Story of the Synagogue* by Geoffrey Wigoder (208pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £20. 0 297 78935 X).

Trouble among the systems

John Henry

ANDRÉ NEHER
Jewish Thought and the Scientific Revolution of the Sixteenth Century: David Gans (1541-1613), and his times
 Translated by David Maisel
 285pp. Oxford University Press/Littman Library. £20.
 0197100570

The aim of André Neher's book is to pay fitting scholarly attention to "a man who, although undoubtedly not a genius, was nevertheless an innovator in the world of science". David Gans, a leading Jewish scholar in late sixteenth-century Prague, was a historian and cosmographer who worked with two of the greatest astronomers of the Scientific Revolution, Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. Concentrating on Gans's *Nehmad ve-Natim*, a cosmological and astronomical treatise written about 1600, but not published until 1743, Neher's major claim is that, contrary to previous scholarly belief, the astronomical system implicit in the Talmudic tradition was heliocentric and heliocentric. Gans himself was unaware of the astronomical perspicacity of the early Jewish sages until Brahe pointed out to him that "the Jews were right", because they had prefigured the system of Copernicus. Even after the conversation with Tycho, however, Gans was too timid, too modest and too set in the old Ptolemaic ways to commit himself fully to the revival of Talmudic heliocentrism, and settled instead for the Pythagorean compromise.

understanding of the geometrical bases for it. But an exception was evidently Lord Brouncker, first President of the Royal Society, whose horoscopic skill still impresses.

The papers edited by Paola Zambelli, "*Astrologi hallucinati*", *Stars and the End of the World in Luther's time*, were delivered at a conference in Berlin in 1984. Overall, they are patchy; but that is largely unavoidable with such collections, and not, in itself, a problem. The title comes from a letter written by Luther in 1524. In typically robust style, he was attacking the astrologers who had predicted a second Flood for February of that year. The cause for concern (including some felt by Luther himself) was a spectacular series of planetary conjunctions in the watery sign of Pisces. These conjunctions provoked an intense debate - theological, eschatological and astrological - in a flurry of widely read tracts throughout Europe, principally between 1519 and 1524.

Most of the contributors to the volume take their cue from this debate. Thus (for example) Zambelli discusses the early and important part played by Luca Gaurico; Stefano Caroti reveals the remarkable extent to which Melancthon was committed to astrological ideas,

including stellar divination; and Hans-Joachim Köhler intelligently combines quantitative and qualitative work, in analysing the powerful influence of astrological pamphlets on public opinion in sixteenth-century Germany.

Two of the best papers, however, are more general. One is again by North, whose subject is ideas of celestial influence from the Stoics, through the influential Islamic author Al-Buhārī (786-866), to thirteenth and fourteenth-century thinkers like Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, John Buridan and Nicholas Oresme. One thing that stands out in all this is the massive contribution of Aquinas. Aquinas attempted to resolve the conflicting demands of Christian theological propriety - especially the freedom of the will - with those of Aristotelian natural philosophy. His solution was to restrict direct celestial influence to all physical matter. This compromise, permitting indirect influence on the soul, via the body, provided a vital bulwark to astrologers well into the seventeenth century.

The second is the paper by Krzysztof Pomian, who presents a convincing case for medieval astrology as a naturalistic, as opposed to theocentric, theology of history. (The only trouble here is astrology's tendency to resemble the fabled elephant explicated by a group of blind men. The temptation is overwhelming to claim that the entire beast is like the leg, or tail, or trunk that one has grasped.)

Unfortunately, there are serious problems with the volume as a whole. In the first place, over fifty pages of text are untranslated. In addition, long passages in the other papers - both text and footnotes - are variously in Latin, German, Italian and French. Second, and just as seriously, there is almost no attempt to draw out and discuss the wider issues that the mass of historical details which are presented could be made to bear upon: intellectually, the Augustinian-Aristotelian split, as carried forward by the heirs of each tradition; socially, each phase of the attempt, by the representatives of the elite, to reform popular or plebeian culture. Work that properly exploits this potential is still largely unwritten.

John North explicitly disavows having undertaken to write a history of astrology. And there is no denying the value of the intellectual spadework which both books carry out. Nevertheless, it would be possible to read both books without realizing the potential of the history of astrology to connect with issues of deeper significance.

Politicizing politics

Anthony Fletcher

MARK KISHLANSKY
Parliamentary Selection: Social and political choice in early modern England
 258pp. Cambridge University Press. £25 (paperback, £8.95).
 0521322316

The relationship between the centre and the localities has become a central preoccupation among historians of Elizabethan and Stuart England. No recurrent event focused that relationship so sharply as parliamentary elections, so Mark Kishlansky's new book is timely. His research has been prodigious; the range and detail of his documentation are impressive; his prose is taut and vibrant; his argument is forceful and emphatic. The preface and first eighteen pages of the book contain its thesis, baldly stated; the rest supports this thesis by examples and selected narratives.

Early modern society, Kishlansky declares, was obsessed with hierarchy and order. He deploys the fertile notion that representation at Westminster at this time was achieved by selection rather than election, by choice that is within small circles of gentry who knew the matter in terms of personal honour and reputation. In and after 1640 came a transition: over a period of twenty years, explored briefly but powerfully in a pivotal chapter, the underlying nature of the process of parliamentary selection changed. After the Restoration it became more systematic: building an interest was something late Stuart gentry planned and organized; ideology became obtrusive; contests be-

came more expensive; voting procedures became regularized. Social choice, by William III's reign, had been transmuted into political choice.

In a series of footnotes, Kishlansky disputes about a dozen of the polls between 1604 and 1640 which Derek Hirst listed in an appendix to his pioneering work *The Representative of the People?* Contests, in this sense, he insists, happened only rarely. His suggestion that, when they did occur, they generally created bitter personal and local feuds is supported by the untypical example of the 1614 Somerset election. This is not convincing. We learn much from the book about the winnowing and sifting that was intended to avoid public confrontation on the election-day but we get little sense of how that day was seen by the county community. Selection or election, whichever we call it, was about the representation of the shire on the national stage. The objective of private gentry meetings, held between the issue of the writ and the county day, was, as Viscount Scudamore put it in Herefordshire in 1661, "to agree upon such persons as they would jointly present to the freeholders". The gathering at the sheriff's summons was never entirely formal or wholly ritualistic. However carefully the ground had been prepared, there was often an element of uncertainty about who would finally stand. Anyway, this was the really important moment, an occasion for the aspirant knights to feast the freeholders and for gentry to decorate the election return with a roll-call of their signatures. If unified choice was always preferable, proper choice, even if that involved the devices of the view, the shout or a poll, mattered even more. The distinction Kishlansky

draws between peaceful elections, settled before the freeholders came together, and divisive ones, following a meeting that found itself forced to choose, seems much too sharp.

Nor does he adequately sustain his view that most contests before the civil war "arose accidentally because of a failure of communication or the tardiness of one entrant or another". In every case where more than two men were rumoured or believed to be ready to serve, considerations of suitability, in terms of their character and political and religious attitudes, could apply. Men had to set their increasing concern for effective representation against their horror of the factionalism inherent in a competition. Sometimes the rhetoric of unity and concord upon which Kishlansky draws so heavily may have been more a tactic than an expression of the foremost objective. Already, in the 1620s, there was concern with weighing men's abilities, with seeking a good "patriot". That term was acquiring significant political connotations. More of the shires were contested in the Long Parliament elections than in 1661 or 1681 or 1689. Kishlansky's desire to escape the shackles of what he calls the "Whig canon" has led him into an excessive scepticism about political consciousness in the localities prior to 1640. This in turn, it may be suggested, causes him to place too much emphasis on the dramatic events of the years from 1640 to 1660 as the motor of change in the electoral process.

This is a provocative book, not a definitive one. It will inspire debate and disagreement. Yet its importance is plain and it should not be missed by anyone seriously interested in early modern England.

of the spheres", which is said to be both Copernican and Talmudic. In fact these two principles cannot both make astronomical sense (in late sixteenth-century terms) if the words "spheres" and "stars" are held to mean the same thing in each case. It is not Neher's way, however, to attempt a careful reconstruction of what Gans might have meant. He merely assumes that these must be elliptical statements of the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems. He manages to find support for this (though the logic of it escapes me) in the fact that Isaac Abravanel, one of Gans's Jewish sources, quoted Pliny as saying that the Sun "is in the midst of the planets". Neher has failed to notice that Pliny's statement is (and was) perfectly compatible with geocentrism, since the Sun was the fourth of seven planets. As Neher's argument is based on misreadings and false assumptions it is not surprising that he is unable to point to a single passage in which Gans actually equates the Talmudic astronomical system with the Copernican. However, Neher gets over this embarrassment simply by composing a suitable "revolutionary assertion" with which Gans "could and should have culminated" the "key chapter" of his book. All that remains is for Neher to solve the pseudo-problem of why Gans did not in fact write such a revolutionary conclusion - but by this stage it is no longer possible to regard Neher's book as a serious work of historical scholarship.

The editors of the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization and the Oxford University Press have taken the trouble to produce the book to the highest standards, which, in more ways than one, is a great shame.

Modern philosophy and the neglect of aesthetics

Roger Scruton

The Greeks were deeply interested in the questions of aesthetics, and their philosophers discussed them in a variety of contexts – moral, political and metaphysical. Nevertheless aesthetics, conceived as a systematic branch of philosophy, is an invention of the eighteenth century. It owes its life to Shaftesbury, its name to Baumgarten, its subject-matter to Burke and Batteux, and its intellectual eminence to Kant. Its irruption into the terrain of philosophy is one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of ideas. In Schiller's *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, the newly discovered faculty of aesthetic judgment is given the sacred task that was once laid on the shoulders of religion – the task of preparing man for his life as a moral being. In Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* art is presented as the successor to religion, an all-embracing form of consciousness in which the truth of the world, at a certain point of spiritual development, is most perfectly distilled. Art and the study of art form the highest point to which man's self-understanding may attain, before emancipating itself from the sensuous, and passing over into the sphere of abstract concepts, philosophical reflection, and natural science – the world of *Wissenschaft*.

What Hegel said was a kind of nonsense. But what he meant was true. Or at least, true enough to serve as the starting-point for discussion. Art, culture and the aesthetic experience have been removed from the central place in philosophical speculation which they briefly occupied. In their place we find science, logical theory, and the rigour – or *rigor moris* – of semantic analysis. This transformation in philosophy has accompanied another and larger change. The triumph of scientific thought has caused such self-doubt, such a loss of faith and simplicity, in those subjects which have had the articulation of man's self-image as their purpose, as to raise the question whether a humane education is any longer possible. At the same time, philosophy's retreat from the study of art and culture has left a vacuum. In its absence, any kind of nonsense can take root and stifle the natural growth of meaning. Here is an instance of what happens to literary criticism, when philosophy abandons it:

Even before it "concerns" a text in narrative form, double invagination constitutes the story of stories, the narrative of narrative, the narrative of deconstruction: in deconstruction: the apparently outer edge of an enclosure, far from being simple, simply external and circular, in accordance with the philosophical representation of philosophy, makes no sign beyond itself, towards what is utterly other, without becoming double or dual, without making itself be "represented", refolded, superposed, re-marked within the enclosure, at least in what the structure produces as an effect of interiority.

Those words occur in a book put together by a collection of staid and bewildered American critics who, having looked in vain for a philosophy that would give sense and direction to their enterprise, at last hit on Jacques Derrida (the author of the passage) as the answer to 'their problems'. Their purpose was to display to the academic world that criticism is alive and well and living in Yale, where, thanks to Derrida, it has discovered a new method and outlook. The name of this method (or anti-method) is deconstruction.

I do not pretend to know what deconstruction is, although apparently it tells us that texts have neither author nor subject-matter, and that reading is impossible. But I should like to reflect on what is implied, when those who are the trustees of a literary tradition as deeply interwoven with life and feeling as ours has been, should consider themselves to be studying nothing more warm or more compromising than a "text", and should be able to draw no more useful conclusion from their studies than that reading is impossible. Surely something has been lost, when those artefacts in which every possible meaning has been deliberately concentrated, should be offered to the world as "unreadable"? Surely philosophy has been neglectful of its duties, if it has allowed matters to proceed to such a pass?

There are some lines of George Seferis, in which he seems to reflect on the burden placed on the modern Greek by the classical culture which surrounds him:

I woke with this marble head in my hands
which exhausts my elbows, and I do not know where
it fell into the dream, as I was emerging . . .

Just such an image occurs to me, when I hear words like "text" and "deconstruction" on the lips of a modern critic. The work of art lies in his hands, as unbearable as an ancient marble whose meaning he cannot fathom. Such a critic seems to be no longer immersed in a civilization, but rather awakening from it, into a flat and desert landscape – a "post-cultural" world. The "text" is a piece of dream-debris, a burden of which he can rid himself only by analysis, or "deconstruction". And in none of this does life play any part.

The collapse of English studies into deconstruction is not, in my view, the cause but the consequence of philosophy's inertia. If literary critics now seem so unable to appreciate the difference between genuine reasoning and empty sophistry, it is partly because philosophy, which is the true guardian of critical thinking, has long ago withdrawn itself from their concerns. When the agenda of philosophy is so narrow and specialized that only a trained philosopher can understand it, it is then surprising that those disciplines which – whether they know it or not – depend upon philosophy for their anchor, should have slipped away helplessly into the night?

But is the cultural isolation of philosophy really so recent a phenomenon? Some would argue that, in jettisoning its links with art and literature, philosophy has returned – after a period of Romantic and post-Romantic aberration – to its traditional role in the modern world, as the handmaiden of the sciences. If we look at the first century of modern philosophy – the century of Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Spinoza and Leibniz – we see philosophical speculation arising in the wake, not of cultural and artistic endeavour, but of scientific experiment. Then as now, it was science which set the agenda for philosophy; and if modern philosophers have been so deeply concerned with logic, probability theory, linguistic analysis and the behavioural sciences, this is because those branches touch upon the frontiers of science, and address themselves to difficulties which, if they are not solved, will hamper the process of discovery. If modern philosophers have been so exercised by the "mind-body" problem, for instance, it is largely because, until it is solved, scientists will not know what they are observing, when they study human behaviour and its causes.

On such an account, the rise of aesthetics was more of a temporary disturbance: an indentation in the smooth project of philosophical enquiry, caused by the neighbouring explosion of the Romantic movement. And Romanticism was itself the product of man's sudden and urgent need to find meaning elsewhere than in church, and in some other posture than on his knees. All revolutions in philosophy either serve to launch some new science, or else exhaust themselves in futile enquiries of which we soon grow tired. Aesthetics came into the world simultaneously with social philosophy: and the comparison between them is significant. Out of social philosophy, economics and sociology were born. But out of aesthetics – what has come out of aesthetics, if not futile enquiries of which we have now grown tired?

There is some truth in the retort. But it needs careful examination. Two features distinguish the philosophers of the seventeenth century from their modern descendants. First, they were fully integrated into the cultural life of their times; second, if they did not look to aesthetics for the source of meaning and value, it was because they were, with few exceptions, sincere believers in a benevolent God, whose redemptive purpose they read more directly in the laws of the created world.

Thus Bacon, Descartes, Locke, Leibniz and Spinoza were, despite their scientific leanings, practising participants in a literary culture. They wrote well – in the case of Bacon and Descartes, surpassingly well. Leibniz composed poetry, and Bacon essays which are as great as any in the language. Even Locke, clumsy though he sometimes was, expressed himself in a manner so succinct and vivid as to enrich intellectual discourse forever after.

Consider the following passage from the *Second Treatise of Civil Government*:

Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a "property" in his own "person". This nobody has any right to but himself. The "labour" of his body and the "work" of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.

The simplicity of language in such a passage is one with the complexity of thought. Each word is used with a full sense of its value, not only as a vehicle for abstract reasoning, but as a purveyor of images. And of course the principal image – that of the workman as mixing his labour, and therefore himself, with the thing that he produces – has lived in the educated conscience ever since, resurging in countless ways in the writings of Smith, Ricardo, Hegel, Marx and their modern followers.

The second distinguishing feature of our forebears is equally important. Each of the philosophers to whom I have referred was a believer, for whom the meaning of the world is neither created by philosophy nor dependent upon philosophy for its construction. Spinoza, it is true, concluded that God is identical with the world, and therefore that many of the claims of theology are erroneous. But he at once set out to show how a person may find peace and happiness in the very recognition of that disturbing truth. And Spinoza's language, as he bent to this task, became so fully alive as to convey a message well beyond the reach of abstract argument. Even Spinoza, therefore, the most forbiddingly technical of the seventeenth-century philosophers, was able to speak directly to the heart. Goethe records, in a moving passage of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the effect that this solemn, mathematical prose was to exert over him:

"Whoever loves God, cannot strive that God should love him in return", with all the preceding sentences upon which it rests, with all the following sentences which spring from it, filled my entire meditations. To be in everything unselfish, to the highest unselfishness in love and friendship, was my greatest desire, my maxim, my rule, and so that insolent remark which follows – "If I love you, what is that to you?" – was spoken directly into my heart.

The fact that the meaning intended by Spinoza was not the meaning understood by Goethe is of small account, beside the evident force, whereby one man has impinged through the written word upon the life and feeling of another.

In both the respects to which I have referred – cultural participation and religious belief – contemporary philosophy differs completely from the philosophy of the seventeenth century. With rare exceptions, the contemporary philosopher is isolated from the surrounding literary culture, with no grasp of style or rhetoric, and with little instinct for linguistic nuances. Of course, there are philosophers with genuine literary gifts – Quine, for instance, and Strawson. And the stylistic insufficiencies of the remainder resemble those of the average practitioner of literary "deconstruction". Nevertheless, there is, in the idiom of modern philosophy, such a poverty of emotion, such a distance from the felt experience of words and things, as to cast doubt on its competence as a vehicle for moral and aesthetic reflection. Here is an example of what I have in mind, taken from a recent work of aesthetics:

I start with some action *A* that some person *P* wants at time *t*₁ to do at time *t*₂. One possibility is that *P* believed at *t*₁ that he cannot perform *A* at *t*₂. Then *P* at *t*₁ has an action-plan for performing *A* at *t*₂. Alternatively, *P* may believe at *t*₁ that there is a chance that he can perform *A* at *t*₂ but there may be no action *A* distinct from *A* such that *P* believes at *t*₁ that he might be able to perform *A* at *t*₂ and that if he did so he might thereby generate *A*. In such a case, let us call the unit set, $\{A\}$, *P*'s action-plan at *t*₁ for performing *A* at *t*₂. But thirdly, there may be at least one ordered set of actions $\{A_1, \dots, A_n\}$, such that *P* believes at *t*₁ that he might be able to perform *A* at *t*₂ and that if he did so he might thereby generate *A*, and believes that he might be able to perform *A*₁ at *t*₁ and that if he did so he might thereby generate *A*₂ at *t*₂. In such a case, let us call the set $\{A_1, \dots, A_n\}$, *P*'s action-plan at *t*₁ for performing *A* at *t*₂. Let us call *A* the goal of that action-plan. And let us call *A*₁ the *intermediate* of the plan.

To understand what is so objectionable in that style, is to understand the spiritual temptation which leads people away from true philosophy into pseudo-science. The whole paragraph is a kind of fraud, an introduction of redundant

terminology from set theory, in order to capture one simple fact, namely, that a plan of action involves a goal, together with the steps chosen to achieve it. Nothing is subsequently done with the technicalities, which serve merely to give a quaint appearance of rigour to banality.

The stylistic catastrophe of analytic philosophy is a subject for another occasion. I shall merely record my opinion that the alienating prose of our philosophers is due not to expertise but to idleness – to a failure to pursue a thought to the point where it speaks itself, in words of its own. (It is precisely this self-utterance of thought that we find in the passage quoted from Locke.) Style is the search for simplicity and naturalness, for the phrase which not only says what you mean, but also embodies within itself all the nuances and hesitations that would enliven the reader's judgment. Philosophy severed from literary criticism is as monstrous a thing as literary criticism severed from philosophy. In each case the result is a kind of intellectual masquerade, a phantom world of discourse, whose principal subject-matter is itself. In philosophy, as in literary criticism, the written word has largely ceased to address itself to living creatures. Only if it contains a theoretical-truth, therefore – a truth to be measured by the exacting requirements of the sciences – can philosophy be justified. This partly explains the peculiar affectation of scientific language on the part of many modern philosophers – even though the real hard work of science lies beyond their competence.

It is the second difference between the seventeenth-century philosopher and his contemporary descendant that interests me. If we examine, from the standpoint of the historian of ideas, the episode in philosophical history to which I referred at the outset of this lecture, then we cannot fail to notice that the rise of aesthetics was simultaneous with the Romantic movement, and with the loss of confidence in revealed religion. In Kant's *Critique of Judgment* the point is already explicitly made, that the sense of God's immanence – the sense of the world as created, and of personality as shining forth from all its aspects – is to be derived from the very same faculty which has beauty as its object and judgment as its goal. It is through aesthetic contemplation that we confront that aspect of the world which was the traditional concern of theology. We cannot prove, by theoretical reasoning, that there is a God; nor can we grasp the *Idea* of God, except by the *via negativa* which forbids us to apply it. Nevertheless, we have intimations of the transcendental. In the sentiment of beauty we feel the purposiveness and intelligibility of everything that surrounds us, while in the sentiment of the sublime we seem to see beyond the world, to something overwhelming and inexhaustible in which it is somehow grounded. Neither sentiment can be translated into a reasoned argument – for such an argument would be natural theology, and theology is dead. All we know is that we can know nothing of the transcendental. But that is not what we feel – and it is in our feeling for beauty that the content, and even the truth, of religious doctrine is strangely and untranslatably intimated to us.

In Kant's third Critique we see, in remarkably explicit form, the historical meaning of that shift in emphasis which was to place ethics and aesthetics at the centre of philosophy. The *Critique of Judgment* situates the aesthetic experience and the religious experience side by side, and tells us that it is the first, and not the second, which is the archetype of revelation. It is aesthetic experience which reveals the *sensus* of the world. Of course, the "sense" turns out to be, for Kant, precisely what religion had assumed it to be. But suppose we do not accept that conclusion? Suppose we look for the meaning of the world in aesthetic experience, while reserving judgment in matters of faith? This would be to give to aesthetic interest an importance comparable to that which once had been attached to religious worship. It would hardly be surprising, in that case, if aesthetics were to move from the periphery of philosophy to the centre, so as to occupy that place which, in the centuries before Bacon and Descartes, had been occupied by theology.

Letters

Change in the Soviet Union

Sir, – Roger Scruton's letter (May 29) contains two false propositions that must be refuted. It also makes a possibly defamatory claim that he should withdraw.

Scruton claims to know that the Soviet political system cannot change. Its study, he asserts, is simply an exercise in empty scholasticism. This is false. Like all social institutions, the Soviet political system evolves in time; both reform and reaction are possible. And because the Soviet Union is a world power, the actions of its government can have a significant effect on international affairs. It is, therefore, that that Soviet politics remain a subject of active academic study in this country.

It is also false to claim that the careers of "sociologists" in Britain depend upon their having made a Faustian pact with Moscow – as Scruton suggests. Sociologists are, mostly, university academics. In their work they make use of the same methodological principles as their colleagues who study French politics, say. And their work is judged according to similar criteria too.

Finally, it is mischievous to imply that Archie Brown's views on the Soviet system and its analyses that he publishes are consciously designed to further the interests of the government in Moscow. This is absolutely not the case. And Scruton should withdraw this unworthy attempt to impugn his reputation.

ALASTAIR MCAULEY,
Department of Economics, University of Essex,
Colchester.

Sir, – Roger Scruton seems to think there is something called "the truth about the communist system" (his words, my italics) which does not change over time or between one country and another. I should have thought that even Professor Scruton might have noticed the differences had he had the opportunity to compare Stalin's Russia in 1937 with Gorbachev's in 1987 or China during the Cultural Revolution with China or Hungary today.

Scruton caricatures academic writing on the Soviet Union when he accuses it of seeing

Sales of books and manuscripts

H. R. Woudhuysen

In the first part of their two-part sale on May 6 and May 28 Sotheby's sold one intriguing fragment of great rarity. In a copy of Sir William Segar's *The Booke of Honor and Armes*, 1590, the title-page and second leaf of George Peele's *An Elegiacall. Gratulatory. Entitled: to the honorable Shepherd of Albions Arcadia: Robert Earle of Essex*, 1589, had been used to strengthen the limp vellum binding. Segar's book on heraldry is a common book, but Peele's poem is very rare: previously only one copy of it was known to exist, in the Bodleian Library. Both Segar's and Peele's works were published by Richard Jones and it is possible that his binder used waste or discarded sheets from Peele's ephemeral pamphlet of 1589 to bind up Segar's more substantial work when it was issued in the next year. Sotheby's estimated that this volume and a copy of Phaeas's translation of the *Aeneid*, 1620, would fetch between £150 and £200; in the event Lantfranch paid £850 for the two.

On May 14 Bloomsbury Book Auctions had a mixed sale with some good anatomy books, most with engraved plates. These did very well with many volumes going over their higher pre-sale estimates. An attractive association item, a copy of A. J. Church's *Two Thousand Years Ago*, inscribed by J. M. Barrie to Michael Lowenly Davies, the prototype for Peter Pan, in 1911 (the year in which the play came out in the form of a novel), and then presented again by Barrie to E. R. Vincent in 1922 after his friend Michael's death by drowning at Oxford, was bought by Joseph for £150 (estimate £60-£80). A more sinister presentation item was a copy of Aleister Crowley's *Rosemund: A Poem*, 1905, published under the name H. D. Carr. This had a long inscription by John Hope Johnstone "upon the eve of

"total transformation in a system which nevertheless remains . . . curiously untransformed". I find it difficult to think of any serious scholar who would speak of the "total transformation" of the Soviet system, but a good many who would point to different tendencies within that system and to some significant changes over time.

So far as change under Gorbachev specifically is concerned, most senior Western diplomats with whom I have spoken who have served in the Soviet Union both in earlier periods and since 1985 have been at least as insistent as I am that what is currently happening in Moscow goes well beyond the cosmetic. Is their honesty to be impugned by Scruton as well? And why should those of us who express a moderate optimism about certain political developments under Gorbachev – an optimism which I, for one, neither felt nor expressed when Brezhnev was at the height of his power – have become more dishonest, "glibble" or "grovelling" than we were before?

It does not require as high a level of political virility and courageous honesty as Scruton might suppose to dismiss the very idea of reform in communist systems and to attack the integrity of Western scholars who detect any signs of change in the Soviet Union. People – and Scruton is no exception – do not generally like the introduction of complexity into matters which seem to them perfectly simple and straightforward and on which their minds are entirely made up. But it is not the task of students of politics to turn old truths into new stereotypes while in the meantime the world changes around them.

ARCHIE BROWN,
St Antony's College, Oxford.

Civil War in Angola

Sir, – One of the hazards of reading Eric Korn's enchanting "Reminders" is that the enchantment of them somehow remains in one's head, and one goes on inadvertently assuming that what one next reads is still part of his Kornworld. So when I turned the page (May 22) and read how Marcel Pruvier believes that in 1975 "Angola was merely a domino in Cuba's African plan to suck out of Africa all

possible cash and non-cash benefits for the purpose of propping up Cuba's perpetually faltering economy", I chorlited at this piece of superb Kornography.

It then occurred to me that these words appeared on your Letters page where, as is well known, people are always on their best behaviour. So they were presumably meant to be serious. Well, domino or no domino, the government of Angola had the good sense to invite the Cubans in to help them in 1975, and by so doing saved the country from being overrun by the armed forces of white South Africa – the so-called South African Defence Force. And that brings us back to Kornland, for the South African "Defence Force" has, since 1975 been, off and on, consistently on the offensive in Southern Africa.

CHRISTOPHER FYFE,
2 St Mary's Street, Edinburgh.

Hawthorne's Letters

Sir, – There is a misprint in Helen McNeill's review of Hawthorne's letters (May 22). Melville met Hawthorne in 1850, the year he was working on *Moby-Dick*, not in 1851, the year of its publication. Though late, it was not therefore "too late", as the review suggests, "for the passionate discourse which Melville desperately wanted". In Melville's own words: "The divine magnet is on you, and my magnet responds." In token of that response *Moby-Dick* was dedicated to Hawthorne.

HAROLD BEAVER,
Engels Seminarium, University of Amsterdam,
Spilstraat 210, Amsterdam.

'Picture Palace'

Sir, – In his otherwise admirable review of the new edition of *Picture Palace* by Malcolm Muggeridge (May 22) Christopher Hawtree says that I nervously turned down the book when it was offered to Cape. This was not so. I feel pretty sure that the book was never offered

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

David Abulafia's *Italy, Sicily and the Mediterranean, 1100-1400* was published earlier this year. Stuart Airlie is a lecturer in Medieval History at St Hilda's College, Oxford. R. W. Ashford is a Senior Lecturer at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Iain Bamforth's collection of poems, *The Modern Copernicus*, was published in 1984. T. J. Blyden is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford. John Campbell's most recent book is *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism*, 1987. Eilean Ni Chuilleanáin is a lecturer in Medieval and Renaissance English at Trinity College, Dublin. *The Second Voyage*, her selected poems, was published last year. H. E. J. Cowdrey is a Fellow of St Edmund Hall, Oxford. His books include *The Age of Abbot Desiderius: Montecassino, the papacy and the Normans in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries*, 1983. Patrick Curry is the editor of *Astrology, Science and Society*, which will be published this month. Anthony Fletcher is Professor of Modern History at the University of Durham. His most recent book is *Reform in the Provinces*, 1986. Tony Gould is Books Editor of *New Society*. Francis Haskell is Professor of Fine Art at the University of Oxford. His latest book, *Past and Present in Art and Taste: Selected essays*, will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS. John Henry is a lecturer in the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. David Lee is a lecturer in French Studies at the University of Reading. Grevel Lindop's new collection of poems, *Tourists*, will be published this month. He is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Manchester. Jennifer Leach is a Fellow of Somerville College, Oxford, and the author of *Parliament and the Crown in the Reign of Mary Tudor*, 1986. Edna Longley has recently published *Poetry in the Wars*. She lectures at Queen's University, Belfast. Neil MacCormick's *Legal Right and Social Democracy: Essays in legal and political philosophy* was published in 1982. He is Regius Professor of Law at the University of Edinburgh. Ian Maclean is Fellow and Praelector in French of The Queen's College, Oxford, and author of *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, published in paperback in 1983. Andrew Motion is Editorial Director of Chatto and Windus. His most recent collection of poetry is *Dangerous Play: Poems 1974-1984*, 1984. Christopher Norris is the editor of *Shostakovich: The man and his music*, 1982. Christopher Perrine's most recent book is *The Encyclopedia of Birds* (with Alex L. A. Middleton), 1985. Alan Ross's *The Emisary: G. D. Birla, Gandhi and independence* was reviewed in the TLS of February 6. Carol Rumens's *Selected Poems* and her novel *Plato Park* were published in March. Clive Scott is a lecturer in the School of Modern Languages and European History, University of East Anglia. His most recent book is *A Question of Syllables: Essays in nineteenth-century French verse*, 1986. Roger Scruton's books include *Art and Imagination*, 1974, and *Sexual Desire: A moral philosophy of the erotic*, 1986. He is Professor of Philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London. Robert Skidelsky is Professor of History at the University of Warwick. His most recent book is *Oswald Mosley*, 1985. John R. G. Turner is Reader in Evolutionary Genetics at the University of Leeds. David Watkin's books include *A History of Western Architecture*, 1986, and *Morality and Architecture*, 1977. Clair Willis is working on a study of contemporary Irish poetry. Adrian Woodbridge is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford.

John R. G. Turner

COMMENTARY

Dissonant activity

Christopher Norris

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH
Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk
Coliseum

"Discordant, confused strains of sound . . . fragments of melody . . . grinding and screaming . . . quacks, grunts and growls . . . this fidgety, screaming, neurotic music . . ." Such was, apparently, Stalin's response after attending a 1936 performance of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. His opinions were duly relayed through a *Pravda* editorial ("Chaos instead of music") which signalled an ominous change of tack in Soviet cultural politics. Shostakovich had completed the opera in 1932, the first of a planned tetralogy whose linking theme was to be "the position of women at different times in Russia". This was a period – in the wake of Lenin's "New Economic Policy" – when ideological constraints had been lifted to a degree, and artists were at liberty to experiment with new styles and ideas, even when these bore the marks of Western modernist influence. Leningrad was a centre for the cultural avant-garde, including those literary intellectuals, members of the so-called "Bakhtin Circle", who were seeking to establish a more open, "dialogical" or liberalized version of Marxist aesthetic theory. Shostakovich was working in Leningrad at the time and would most likely have been acquainted with their work through his friend and mentor, the musicologist Ivan Sollertinsky. And indeed there is something reminiscent of Bakhtin in his music up to 1936: a style that can veer, almost within the bar, from populist rhetoric to nobly suffering pathos, from a skittish neo-classicism bred out of Hindemith and Stravinsky to a thoroughly Mahlerian intensity of tragic feeling.

The *Pravda* editorial changed all that. *Lady Macbeth* was not revived until 1962, and then in a form that incorporated various changes to the scoring and libretto, most of them by way of toning down the overtly erotic elements. Under its new title *Katerina Ismailova*, this became the more familiar version through records and occasional performances in the West. Now English National Opera has revived the original in a staging that will surely be remembered as a landmark production in the work's complicated history. This performance misses nothing of the bleak, relentless character, the violent contrasts of mood and the extreme, almost manic intensity of Shostakovich's vision. In the revised version these effects were somewhat softened, partly by those changes of scoring and instrumentation which took out some of the offending detail (like the famous trombone glissandi that accompany the lovemaking between Katerina and Sergei at the close of Act I). What comes across most strongly in the original is the music's extreme complexity of mood, the way it resists any kind of unambiguous emotional involvement. Tragedy prevails in the final Act, where Katerina, having murdered her husband and father-in-law for the sake of Sergei, now condemned (along with him) to exile, has to face the taunts of his new mistress and in des-

peration drowns both herself and her rival. But the rest of the opera is shot through with those unsettling contrasts of mood and style which characterize so much of Shostakovich's early work.

To begin with it seems that Shostakovich approached the story (by the nineteenth-century novelist Nicolai Leskov) with a view to treating Katerina's character in a more sympathetic and humanly revealing light. In his own words of 1933, "Leskov finds no grounds either for moral or for psychological justification . . . I interpreted Katerina as a vigorous, talented, beautiful woman who perishes in the dismal, cruel domestic environment of the Russia of merchants and serfs". Such is indeed the overwhelming impression generated in the last Act. But it also seems clear that, like other Soviet artists at the time, he was out to demolish the kind of typecast "bourgeois" thinking that drew a sharp line between tragedy and satire, or the values of authentic selfhood on the one hand and those of objective social commentary on the other. The ENO performance is fully alive to these suggestions, bringing out the elements of farce and black humour that constantly threaten to undermine the redemptive, humanizing vision. They are certainly more pronounced in this original version, where for instance Katerina, in the Act I bedroom scene, gives the impression not so much of a yearning romantic heroine as of one in the grip of a violent, compulsive erotic drive of which Sergei is merely the precipitating cause. It is a hugely demanding role and few singers could match Josephine Barstow in her willingness to set decorum aside and play this wildly contradictory figure for all she is worth. As with Bakhtin's idea of the "carnavalesque", its effect is to relativize values and generic conventions through a constant mixing of high and low mimetic forms.

Of course this is, at one level, a powerful feminist statement, an exposure of the patriarchal tyranny that has saddled Katerina with a wretchedly inadequate husband, consigned her to a life of stupefying boredom and subjected her to Boris with his odious ideas of woman's nature and social role. *Lady Macbeth* grew out of that period in the 1920s when questions of the family, sexual politics and female emancipation were very much on the Soviet political agenda. With Stalin's reassertion of the orthodox line these debates came abruptly to an end, as well as the strain of "bourgeois-decadent" artistic production that supposedly went along with them. But there is another side to the musical commentary in *Lady Macbeth*. When the father-in-law Boris plans to seduce Katerina, confident in the knowledge that her husband is impotent and that "every woman needs a man", the old male presumption is mocked but not altogether disowned, since the scene follows one in which Katerina's frustrated sexual desires are graphically expressed in the music.

As so often with Shostakovich, however, there seems to be a range of conflicting impulses at work which cannot be resolved into any single or coherent "message". One is the use of fairly crude shock-tactics, dramatic and musical, to explode complacent bourgeois

ideas of everyday moral decency. In *Lady Macbeth* it is most strikingly achieved (and superbly brought off in the ENO production) with the scene just after Katerina has poisoned Boris, when the funeral rites are conducted in an atmosphere of wild parodic abandon. And of course it is present in the love-making scenes, especially when combined (as here) with an on-stage commentary by massed brass instruments positioned directly above the adulterous marriage-bed. But this strain of unbridled savage farce is very often set off against an undertow of plaintive, emotionally charged music which prevents the satire from completely taking over. Any production will have to walk a tightrope of conflicting emotions, and this one does so with extraordinary power and conviction.

A measure of its success can be taken from the gap between what the programme notes say about the opera and what comes across in the actual performance. Up to a point the notes are a model of their kind, with much useful information about the opera's background, its early fortunes and subsequent history. But they also exert a steady pressure to interpret this music retrospectively as a coded expression of Shostakovich's hatred not only for the evils of Stalinism but for every aspect of communist society. Thus we are given lengthy excerpts from Robert Conquest on the Purges, from Galina Vishnevskaya on the filming of the opera (ludicrous problems of censorship in the love-making scenes), and – more to the point – from *Testimony*, the posthumous "memoirs" supposedly dictated by Shostako-

Phallic funster

David Nokes

JOE ORTON
What the Butler Saw
BBC 2

In Stephen Frears's film, *Prick Up Your Ears*, Joe Orton's plays are barely mentioned. In both life and death Orton's most outrageous theatrical invention was himself, the scissors-and-paste Dadaist of public library books, the cocksure Casanova of the cottages, the perpetrator and ultimate victim of domestic scenes of *petit guignol*. The *Observer* once called him "the Oscar Wilde of Welfare State gentility".

In Wilde's case sexual notoriety and epigrammatic wit are two separate elements in his subsequent reputation; with Orton they are consistently and self-consciously combined. Reminding himself to "hot-up" his revision of *What the Butler Saw* (first performed posthumously in 1969) he noted in his diary that "Sex is the only thing that infuriates them. Much more fucking and they'll be screaming hysterics in next to no time." In fact what is infuriating about *What the Butler Saw* is not its sex but its wit. The language has been left too long under the microwave and comes out crackling with one-liners but devoid of flavour. Every character, from the hotel bell-boy to the Government Inspector, speaks like a down-market Noël Coward. Yet their wit seems to escape from them unnoticed; they are unconscious agents of their own epigrams. The effect is to turn language into an absurd alien imposition; a curious hybrid of fake gentility and Freudian formula which, like the asylum set, confirms the helplessness of individuals to make sense of their own sentences. As a result, the only voice which sounds clearly through the play is that of Orton himself, the prankster-in-chief and puppet-master, prepping himself on his paradoxes and relishing a schoolboyish cheekiness in running amok among society's totemic taboos.

What the Butler Saw is often described as Orton's best play. It is certainly his most artfully contrived and allusive work. Reading it on the page, one appreciates the parodic manipulation of farce motifs, the clever counterfeiting of psychoanalytical jargon, the spoof of Bachelard's myths. In production, though, the play rarely comes to life. The self-conscious parade of theatrical devices, from Dr Rance's que-

vich to his student Solomon Volkov, an émigré musicologist now living in America. Nowhere does the programme so much as hint that this is a document of doubtful authenticity, but a veritable gift for the purposes of cold-war cultural propaganda. As Volkov presents it, there is a muttering undertow of cryptic anti-Soviet comment to just about every major work in the Shostakovich canon. Western critics are inexorably drawn to take sides in this debate, since any judgment about the music or performances of it – in scholarly articles, record sleeve-notes, concert reviews or whatever – will tend to reflect some position on the rival claims of "socialist realism" versus the covert dissident meanings that Volkov finds everywhere at work.

The ENO production most effectively rebuts any simplified account of this music's political message. Certainly it questions the prevalent idea that Shostakovich must have learned, through bitter experience, to cultivate a kind of schizoid creative life, on the one hand composing "public" works in the acceptable socialist-realist vein, while on the other reserving his deepest thoughts for the "private" medium of the string quartets and other more intimate forms. In fact the two strains were always closely intertwined, as *Lady Macbeth* makes clear in its constant facing-about between brash, raucous satire and introverted brooding. The music comes across in David Pountney's fine production as altogether more generous, complex and rewarding than any of the messages currently read into it by ideologues of whatever persuasion.

"Why are there so many doors?" to Sergeant Match's final apotheosis – like a trip from *The Golden Bough*, dressed in a leopard skin and bearing aloft the missing part of Sir Winston Churchill – are like so many satiric points to be scored. The hectic acceleration of the farce plot produces not animation but, paradoxically, a sense of dramatic paralysis. These characters are trapped in a world where both language and actions are stereotyped beyond any hope of individual expression. In this production the acting is faultless: Prunella Scales plays Mrs Prentice as a vamped-up Sybil Fawcett; Timothy West's Dr Rance is a bull-headed B-movie buffon; Dinsdale Landen is elegantly hopeless as Dr Prentice. In both pace and intonation – essential elements in any Orton production – their performances are first class. Barry Davis's direction economizes on camera angles to preserve the claustrophobic staginess of the madhouse set, and the peep-hole viewpoint implied by the play's title. Yet all are working with an unforgiving text in which the most that any actor can hope for is not to lose the pre-stressed force of the lines.

Discovering her husband clutching a woman's dress, Mrs Prentice asks, "Have you taken up transvestism? I'd no idea our marriage teetered on the edge of fashion." Orton's play teeters on the edge of profundity, peeping occasionally into the playground of the absurdist avant-garde, but retreating always into the secure naughtiness of an end-of-the-pier show. "You can't be a rationalist in an irrational world", says Dr Rance. "It isn't rational." His remark suggests that Orton's madhouse is a metaphor for a society where the doctors are more insane than the patients. But in context the line sounds like just another of the playful paradoxes with which Orton spices his script.

More typical is the running joke about the missing part of Sir Winston Churchill. This was the first production I have seen in which the part was properly restored as a giant phallus, rather than a metonymic cigar. Orton affected surprise when originally the Lord Chamberlain banned the phallus. "That isn't libellous, surely," he insisted. "I wouldn't sue anyone, for saying I had a big prick. No man would. In fact I might pay them to do it." Brandished aloft in this production, the phallus was the final confirmation of the play's harmless, playful humour. In 1969 the play was considered shocking and subversive. Now the BBC treats it as traditional Bank Holiday fare.

Looking at loss

Frances Spalding

Paradise Lost: The neo-Romantic imagination in Britain 1935-1955
British Art Gallery, until July 19

Paradise Lost opens with an anachronism: within the strangely static landscape in Rex Whistler's "The Vale of Aylesbury", evoking a pre-industrial Britain, sits a figure in twentieth-century dress. If this exemplifies the nostalgia that is a recurrent aspect of the neo-Romantic imagination, as it is constructed in this exhibition, the other extreme is the grim bestiality conveyed by Francis Bacon's crooning monoliths in "Three Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion". These two pictures suggest the breadth of a show which resists predictable groupings, incorporating painting, illustration, photography and film stills, the exhibition shows how awareness of the Second World War – its approach, duration and aftermath – fostered a set of concerns and attitudes that cut across national boundaries and link anonymous Ministry of Information photographers with leading artists such as Paul Nash and John Piper. It brings out an urgent search for sustaining myths and continuities, as John Piper retrospectively observes: "Roots became something to be nurtured and clung to instead of destroyed."

The result was a period obsession with all things English. Here on the walls and in richly picked display cases, we are reminded of the proliferation of guide books in the 1930s, of the interest in vernacular architecture and prehistoric sites. While landscape painting revived, hillwalking and mountaineering became popular sports, here illustrated by W. A. Rother's mountain photographs, some detailing specific climbs. Elsewhere, the prominence of the land during wartime, owing to emphasis on cultivation, is suggested by Ministry of Information photographs of reclaimed wasteland. But it is the "Recording Britain" photo-



A detail from John Craxton's "Pastoral for P.W." (1948), from the exhibition *A Paradise Lost*, reviewed here.

graphs, commissioned by the Arts Council's predecessor, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, that best convey the patriotic nostalgia of the period. They catch fairground horses, a gypsy caravan, Sir Thomas Tresham's triangular lodge, engraved glass in a saloon bar and other items redolent of national life and character.

Paul Nash's "A Haunted Garden", a photograph taken circa 1940, is symptomatic of the

lines, and his inability seems linked to a failure to perceive the depth of his role. His *Oedipus* is neither a king nor an archetype, but simply a man with problems. Those problems being largely of a magical and symbolic nature, they are in turn trivialized by such a treatment.

Inevitable use of make-up compounds these difficulties. Threlfall's hair, a mass of matted dreadlocks, seems appropriate enough for the aged outcast of *Colonus*; but in the earlier play it sets him uncomfortably apart from Michael Harbour's suave, business-like Creon and Eleanor Bron's glittering, stubborn Jocasta, marking him far too clearly as a misfit and sacred victim. After the blinding, he enters with both arms crimson to the elbow, his tunic apparently doused with a gallon of red paint, his bleeding eyes the least conspicuous thing about him. At moments like this one thinks about him. At moments like this one is wistfully of the advantages of masks, and it is disappointing to find Caspar Wrede in a programme note dismissing the use of masks as a feature that "tends to put barriers between us and the Greek drama".

It would be grudging not to acknowledge the production's unflagging pace and workmanlike clarity, the forceful geniality of Esben Skjoldberg as Theseus, the protagonist's protector in *Oedipus at Colonus*, or the adroit shift Eleanor Bron achieves from the tough yet seductive Jocasta of the first play to a sensitive and almost broken Ismene in the second. Partly because the second play's quieter tone offers less temptation to emotional extremism, *Oedipus at Colonus* gains in conviction at Colonus, acquiring a laconic, stony steadfastness that fits his impending apotheosis and transformation into a local culture-hero; and Michael Harbour builds on the sickness of his earlier Creon to show his brutally shortsighted power-politics as the natural outgrowth of an inherent complacency and egotism. Though *Oedipus* never quite touches either the sacredness or the horror which are at the heart of ancient tragedy, at least boredom and deadliness respectability are kept well at bay.

Cliché at Colonus

Grevel Lindop

SOPOCLES
Oedipus
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester

To offer *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus* in a single evening, in a new translation, with an eleven-strong singing and dancing chorus, is to promise a good deal. If this production never quite matches expectation, generating constant interest and occasional excitement but no real magic, it is not through any want of courage or energy. Problems seem to stem, rather, from a mistrust of the plays' ritual elements.

Caspar Wrede's direction is oddly naturalistic, and the general reluctance to stylize or symbolize matches all too well David Threlfall's diminished and uncertain *Oedipus*. Threlfall tries hard for tragic stature but his account of the protagonist in *Oedipus the King* seems too personal, too introverted. As the truth about his parentage and acquisition of the Theban throne emerges, he appears to shrink, becoming querulous and irritable. At the crucial moments of recognition he rears, leaving himself at the mercy of some of the weakest lines in an uneven translation.

Christopher Stace's version is uncluttered and direct, but seems affected by the notion that you can bring an ancient text to life by trimming it with modern clichés. This tendency combines unhappily with a habit of translating Sopotocles' Zeus as "God" to produce some very uncomfortable moments. Bad enough to hear the Chorus greeting Creon's threats to *Oedipus* in the second play with a solemn chanting of "If you think you can do this in Athens, you are mistaken!" Worse still to hear *Oedipus* respond to Jocasta's account of Laius' death as proving *Oedipus* himself the murderer with "It isn't possible! God, it can't be true!" followed by "I see it all now! I see it all too clearly!" Threlfall is unable to redeem such

COMMENTARY

neo-Romantic climate. Its subject is a flight of steps in a derelict garden. Stone balls punctuate the balustrade each time the steps change direction. The formality of their design, set against the drift of nature, creates an image evocative of absence and loss, and which in its psychological intensity owes much to de Chirico. Neo-Romanticism, though often dependent on a strong sense of design, reacted against the orthodoxy of "significant form", an aesthetic which in its search for formal harmonies had imposed emotional restraint on artists. The expressiveness uncovered here takes many forms and styles, including some that are stagey and kitsch. Robert Melville's "The Somnambulist", for example, is a piece of up-market Gothic, a rippling, morbid extravaganza in a Cecil B. de Mille setting. Michael Ayrton and Leslie Hurry at their worst become histrionic, and John Minton's waifs in "The Outskirts" are horribly mawkish. These make up a small part of the imaginative profusion that also gives us Minton's taut designs for book illustrations and dust-jackets, the mystic visions of Cecil Collins and the elaborate intricacies of David Jones's watercolours.

The show is refreshingly democratic. Illustrators such as Alan Sorrell, whose archaeological reconstructions of life in Bronze and Iron Age Britain remain lodged in childhood memory, are treated equally with Henry Moore and Graham Sutherland. What emerges is a sense of a shared imaginative vision. Given this emphasis on the communal nature of the neo-Romantic imagination, it is disappointing to find that the organizer, David Mellor, has opted in the catalogue for short, idiosyncratic essays on individual artists – and on only thirteen of them. The trajectory of neo-Romanticism is further obscured by a lack of chronological organization. Moreover, an essay on the photography, as informative as Nanette Aldred's on the fantasy films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, would have been useful.

The free-wheeling, ambitious nature of this exhibition cannot disguise its omissions and distortions. Women artists receive short shrift. No work by Frances Hodgkins is included although she was acclaimed a leading neo-Romantic by Kenneth Clark, Robin Ironside and Raymond Mortimer. Prunella Clough's 1940s work, which contributed memorably to the 1983 neo-Romantic exhibition held in London and Cardiff, is also omitted. And why is Barbara Jones (whose dates have eluded the catalogue) represented by only one painting and none of her illustrated books? Why, too, in a major show of this kind, has so little use been made of material in public collections in the provinces? Considerable emphasis is placed on the rediscovery of Leslie Hurry and Gerald Wilde but their work fails to distract from the absence of Ivon Hitchens.

Most critical of all is a lack of focus on the achievement of the neo-Romantic landscapists. Neither exhibition, catalogue nor handout indicates the extent to which Graham Sutherland instigated this whole movement. The essay on him in the catalogue appears after essays on artists he influenced, and deals chiefly with his post-1945 work. Nowhere is there any discussion of the 1920s rediscovery of Samuel Palmer, nor of the way in which Surrealism furthered an interest in his expressive intensity and formal inventiveness. The breadth of the exhibition, in some ways so admirable, belittles the achievement of Sutherland, Minton and Craxton. By placing their landscapes alongside Rex Whistler's thin idyll, in a section entitled "The Other Eden", it suggests that they too partook in the period conservatism, nostalgia and love of fantasy, all of which are major aspects of the show. Minton's "Dark Wood, Evening", Craxton's "Poet in Landscape" and Sutherland's Welsh landscapes, however, do not escape contemporary horror, but encapsulate a more complete reflection of the human psyche.

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Traders and the World of the Middle Ages. The world of the guilds in Venice and Europe, c.1250-1650. 289pp. Croom Helm. £35. 07099 17635
VITTORIO BRANCA (Editor)
Merchants and Traders: Ricordi nella Firenze tra medioevo e rinascimento. 603pp. Milan: Rusconi. L42,000. 8818 120336

Venice's history has been written mainly from above: the emphasis has been on the patriciate, the policy of the Doge and Council, above all on the way in which the Venetian nobility created a constitutional system that preserved their position of power without resulting in violent confrontation with the Venetians at large. Frederick Lane saw Venice in a sense as the distinguished ancestor of the American system of government, reflecting half-consciously the views of those sixteenth-century observers

Doors of perception

H. E. J. Cowdrey

HERBERT BLOCH
Monte Cassino in the Middle Ages. Three volumes, 1,530pp. Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura. L350,000.

In 1065, Abbot Desiderius of Montecassino anticipated an Italian expedition by Henry IV of Germany, and went to Amalfi to buy suitable presents. He was impressed by the bronze doors of the cathedral that an Amalfitan merchant, Pantaleo, had recently procured in Constantinople. So he commissioned similar doors for the west portal of the old basilica at Montecassino; they were paid for by Pantaleo's father, Maurus.

Montecassino's bronze doors have a commanding place in Herbert Bloch's three magnificent volumes, *Monte Cassino in the Middle Ages*, which have been long and eagerly awaited. As he explains, his work is in fact neither a history of Montecassino in the Middle Ages nor a methodical treatment of its rich and many-faceted heritage. It is largely limited to the period between the monks' return from exile in 950 under Abbot Aligernus and the Emperor Lothar III's visit in 1137; it concentrates upon the glories and decline of Montecassino's golden age under Abbots Desiderius and Odisius I.

Professor Bloch begins by expanding a study published in 1946 of Montecassino as a political and cultural link, which the acquisition of bronze doors from Constantinople illustrates, between Byzantium and the West. He then turns to the doors themselves, with a full discussion of all related Italian metalwork. He provides the fullest and most authoritative treatment of the subject, not least of the doors that Pantaleo presented in 1070 to St Paul's without the Walls at Rome. Bloch demonstrates that of Desiderius's original doors at Montecassino, the only panels now visible are the two dedication panels at the base and the adjacent crosses. As at present arranged, the remaining thirty-six panels, which list 186 of Montecassino's possessions, comprise twenty set in place c.1124 by order of Abbot Odisius II, complemented by sixteen borrowed, probably several decades after the devastating earthquake of 1349, from side doors. During the restoration of the doors after the bombardment in 1944, the exciting discovery was made that on the reverse of nine of Odisius's main-door panels there survive figures of patriarchs and apostles from Desiderius's original doors. Bloch describes them as "precisely dated examples of Byzantine art at its best". Odisius II, whose work the visitor now sees, had changed the entrance doors of the basilica from a major work of Byzantine-manufactured religious art into a sort of grandiose cartulary. It is an index of the abbey's early twelfth-century decline.

With meticulous thoroughness, Bloch locates, so far as possible, and discusses each of the 186 possessions listed. But, since Odisius's work was damaged in the fourteenth

century, the "cartulary" is incomplete. Bloch therefore adds to the evidence of the doors by drawing up and commenting upon concordances of the possessions listed there and also in papal privileges issued between 1057 and 1122 as well as in the imperial diplomas of 1047 and 1137. He thereby establishes something approaching a complete tale of Montecassino's dependencies and possessions, noting that between the privileges of 1059 and 1097 they increased by some 70 per cent.

Bloch ends by revising his article of 1953 on Montecassino and the Anacletan Schism of 1130, during which the abbey's arch-forger, Peter the Deacon, sought to establish the dependence upon it of the monastery of Saint-Maur-sur-Loire, or Glanfeuil. In effect, Peter aspired to complement Montecassino's greatness as Odisius II placarded it upon the bronze doors of its basilica, by claiming for it an overlordship over all French monasteries. One can only hint at the scholarship of Bloch's study, which in the main areas that it covers is unlikely ever to be superseded.

The governance of Germany

Stuart Airlie

HORST FUHRMANN
Germany in the High Middle Ages c.1050-1200. Translated by Timothy Reuter. 186pp. Cambridge University Press. £20 (paperback, £6.95). 0521 26638 6
KARL JORDAN
Henry the Lion: A biography. Translated by P. S. Falla. 268pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £30. 0 19821969 5

Both of these books, written by eminent medievalists and clearly translated, deal with a crucially important era of German history. The fact that a significant gap in the English-language literature has had to be filled by translations of eight-year-old German books is not, however, an unimpaired blessing.

Horst Fuhrmann gives us 150 stormy years in 180 pages. His narrative is economical and lucid, though he opens with a relatively leisurely chapter on space, time and man in the Middle Ages. This masterly survey of "medieval anthropology", with its evocation of the harsh environment and alien thought-world of the period, is followed by a deft sketch of the transformation of Western Europe into something recognizably "modern" by the year 1200.

After this, it is disappointing to find that the body of Professor Fuhrmann's book is relatively conventional. We are offered a narrative of German political history from Henry III to Frederick Barbarossa, structured around the lives and activities of kings. This has advantages: kings were important. Furthermore the concentration on this particular area does result in clarity. Fuhrmann describes the political

shows, for instance, how membership was quite evenly spread through the city: there was not really a quarter where (say) the shoe-makers or boatmen resided, and this homogeneity presents a marked contrast to several other late medieval cities.

The lack of a textile-producing proletariat provides a ready explanation of the absence of social violence similar to the *Ciompi* rebellion in late fourteenth-century Florence; but in fact there were some textile guilds in Venice, where there existed a lively production of fustians, and Mackenney attributes the loyalty of the artisans of Venice to a positive rather than negative factor: an awareness that the prosperity of the city as a commercial centre depended on the co-operative endeavour of artisans, merchants and nobles; such an attitude fostered ready acceptance of "capitalist" forms of economic organization. This was itself reflected in the way that guilds brought together in a single membership both tradesmen and traders (hence his title); it was the identity of the city as a commercial entrepôt that determined the acceptance by all Venetians of a form of government in which most had no say. In fact Mackenney argues, more by assertion than by demonstration, that the Venetian guilds had a positive effect on economic activity around 1500, at precisely the point when the European guilds are usually condemned by historians for their lack of adaptability.

The strength of this pioneering book is its embarrassing emphasis on a vast array of subjects which lie at the very heart of Venetian history and yet have been consistently ignored by historians. This is a Venice shorn of the myth of constitutional perfection, but still a community that works, in every sense of the phrase. Mackenney's achievement is not so much that of finding answers to fundamental questions about how the city really functioned, as that of indicating which questions need to be asked and where clues to an answer might lie. There are bound to be unresolved difficulties; his description of the relationship between the craft guilds, or *arti*, and the charitable confraternities, or *scuole*, becomes immersed in a real Venetian fog when he begins to describe the involvement of the *scuole* in civic ceremonial: as he confusingly admits in the end, "it is difficult to generalize about Venetian festivals because they took many forms".

situation between the death of Henry V and the accession of Barbarossa without becoming bogged down in the sort of detail that clogs the opening pages of Karl Jordan's *Henry the Lion*. Short but apposite quotations from the sources and perceptive character-sketches – of Henry IV, for example – enliven the narrative.

Despite the succinct sections on the rise of an urban economy, the chivalrous culture of the Hohenstaufen court and colonization and expansion on the Eastern frontier, there is no real sense of how regional history can offer a key to understanding the problems and aspirations of the German monarchy. Karl Leyser's recent survey of the tensions of eleventh-century Saxony is exemplary here. What Fuhrmann gives us is Germany in a European context. This means that sometimes there is more information on France and England when we would prefer more about Germany. One might, for example, sacrifice the pages on Abelard and St Bernard for more on Hildegard of Bingen. As it is, Germany is juxtaposed with France and England to show how different it was, how archaic its institutions were and how fragmented were the powers of its monarchy. *Der deutsche Sonderweg* seems to have begun early, but were Stephen's England and Louis VI's France so very different from Germany?

Perhaps the German aristocracy was exceptionally powerful vis-à-vis the crown. On some levels it seems hard to distinguish kings from magnates. Indeed, according to Otto of Freising, Frederick Barbarossa owed his election as king not to the fact that his descent was more regal than that of his rivals but to his being of both Wettin and Hohenstaufen stock and thus an acceptable compromise candidate. It is not therefore surprising that later Hohenstaufen propaganda sought to exalt the dynasty by link-

ing it to its Merovingian, Carolingian and Salian predecessors. But the aristocracy could play this game too. The Wettin's house chronicle, the *Historia Welforum* of c.1170, traced a dazzling pattern of imperial descent beside which Barbarossa appeared a parvenu. The great merit of Jordan's magisterial biography of Barbarossa's *Welf Doppelgänger*, Henry the Lion, is that while it sees the importance of the Welf's view of himself, it also offers a painstaking analysis of the realities of Henry's power on the ground. Jordan's survey of Henry's ruthless exploitation of his rights in Saxony and Bavaria provides the regional framework necessary for understanding twelfth-century Germany. Barbarossa needed to work with men like Henry if Germany was to be governed and Jordan shows how co-operation suited both men. Their final dramatic quarrel was by no means inevitable.

While the teaching and understanding of medieval German history is now greatly facilitated, these two books present some problems. *Henry the Lion* is published without the plates of the German edition and the publishers have added almost nothing to its predominantly German-language bibliography. This is a pity as the recent sale of the Lion's Gospels provoked much general interest and a flurry of new literature, as well as a re-dating to c.1188 which modifies Jordan's discussion of the Fuhrmann's German bibliography is replaced with a very useful survey of English-language material but surely some foreign-language scholarship could have been included. Still, this volume gets Cambridge's own series of Medieval Textbooks off to a good start, even if the nature of Timothy Reuter's bibliography means that it is full of items – not least his own – that challenge the assumptions of the German work he has translated.

Multiple billing

Christopher Perrins

TERENCE GRANT
Origin and Evolution of Darwin's Finches. Princeton, Calif.: Princeton University Press. £20.70 (paperback, £15.10). 06904270

Darwin's Finches (the fourteen species comprise a small subfamily of finches, the Geopeliidae), are, at first sight, an uninspiring group of birds in this archipelago, one species has been taken and modified for different ends. And it is now generally accepted that these finches are indeed descended from a common ancestor which reached the Galapagos from the mainland, and that, in the course of time, they colonized the different islands and adapted to the local environment. Eventually some re-invaded islands inhabited by other stocks of finches. If the two forms were different enough, they may have remained as separate breeding units, perhaps in competition with one another and so evolving even greater differences.

Peter Grant's book is the result of a series of very detailed field studies conducted by a series of people over the past fifteen years. He describes the variation in the ways of life of these small birds. The most conspicuous physical variation is in bill-size, which ranges from fine-ly pointed in the Warbler finch, to something

On the rocks

R. W. Ashford

RYAN NELSON
Living with Seabirds. Edinburgh University Press. £12.95. 05204523 8

Inspired by the pioneer ethologists, ecologists and naturalists, Niko Tinbergen, David Lack, Charles Elton and Fraser Darling, Bryan Nelson forsakes the academic environment of Oxford and a study of blackbirds for the Bass Rock, a volcanic plug in the Firth of Forth. For three years, he and his wife lived virtually alone on the Bass, questioning every aspect of penguin life.

Most scientists concentrate on the questions what? and how? – leaving to priests, philosophers and Kipling the question why? It falls to biologists such as Nelson to tackle this most fundamental question in scientific terms, and his answers are sometimes disturbing, as when he shows complex behaviour patterns to be governed by rigid adherence to a predetermined programme. Why is only one egg laid when two young could be successfully reared? What is the significance of the "clubs" where

both breeding and non-breeding birds congregate at the edge of the colony? Why is it that young birds are so fattened that they cannot fly, and have to begin their southward journey by swimming?

Nelson went on to study the tropical boobies of the Galapagos, the Peruvian guano islands, and on Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, where the dwindling population of Abbott's booby nests precariously in the crowns of rain-forest trees which are, themselves, threatened by indiscriminate logging.

Fascinating asides describe the extraordinary incidents which inevitably accompany a nomadic life, from evading customs inspection to dinner with Prince Philip. Nor is the main interest of the book exclusively concerned with gannets and their relatives; Frigatebirds and Mocking birds, Darwin's finches and Herring gulls all provide material for entertaining anecdotes or for more serious philosophizing. This account is a heartfelt description of a lifelong labour of love. As an autobiography it gives a clear flavour of the attraction of the desert islands where the author has spent so much of his life, although there is no real indication here of the special qualities which drive a man to seek such isolation.

dropped. In Kenya there is now the "Green Belt" initiative, dedicated to the preservation of the topsoil through reforestation. Villagers, again mainly women, gather and cultivate the seeds of native trees for replanting in the wild. So far sixty village nurseries have produced more than two million trees.

Lee Durrell's *State of the Ark* – a worldwide survey of conservation problems and practices – reminds us that an interest in respecting and preserving one's environment is not solely a Western phenomenon, nor only the concern of the well-fed and the well-placed. Gerald Durrell in a foreword – admirably short – to his wife's book notes that she "has managed to expunge that awful phrase Third World from her text". There is, as he says, only one world and some of the burden of looking after it has been shouldered by 13,733 voluntary bodies in South and Central America, by 12,292 in Africa, and by 10,137 in Southern Asia.

This book provides an excellent satellite picture of current environmental issues. Unfortunately, however, like all satellite pictures, it takes some deciphering. Much worthwhile information in the book has been camouflaged by a layout designer with a mania for technicolour. Green box articles, yellow case histories, purple diagrams and harlequin maps clash with each other on almost every page, quickly losing the clarity of the text. One full-page synchronization with the growth of "NGOs", exposition, describing the growth of a "NGO", using eight colours, four graphs and a lurid map without letting the uninitiated in on the secret of what "NGOs" actually are. They are Non-Government Organizations and they deserve the encouragement they will get from Lee Durrell's book.

In 1983, Malaysian conservationists collected 45,000 signatures in seven months to protest against the threatened flooding of the Ulu Mulu National Park by a proposed hydroelectric scheme. The scheme was

like a heavily built Hawfinch in the Large ground finch. Grant shows how the bill size of many species is related to the seeds which are available to them and how, when two or more species are present on the same island, they divide up the range of seeds between them.

The finch populations are dependent on these seed crops, which may be rich in years of heavy rains or fall almost completely in drought years. This has the effects one might expect – in drought years there is little or no breeding and a striking decline in numbers: for example in 1977 the population of the Medium ground finch on Daphne Major island fell from about 1,200 individuals to only 180 during a drought. However, more interestingly, survival was not random. Those seeds which were available during the drought were predominantly the larger ones; the birds with the larger bills could cope with these more efficiently than those with smaller bills. The intense natural selection observed (those with small bills died) provided a striking insight into the way in which evolution may have formed these finches over past generations.

Some species are so similar in appearance to each other that the measurements of certain individuals of one species may overlap the measurements of individuals of another species. In some cases it is virtually impossible for an observer to decide to which species an individual belongs. Yet hybrids, although recorded, are very rare in nature. This immediately raises the question of how the birds themselves manage to mate with individuals of their own species? Field experiments using stuffed birds and tape recordings of song show that the birds make visual judgments on the basis of bill and body-size and auditory judgments on the basis of song. The "correct" song and appearance are probably learned by the young hearing their fathers' song and observing their parents before they even leave the nest.

This is a very valuable work and many examples from it will find their way into the standard textbooks on evolutionary theory. These drab little birds look set to continue to excite biologists for many years yet.

Schematic sketches

Euan Dunn

NICHOLAS HAMMOND
Twentieth Century Wildlife Artists. 224pp. Croom Helm. £30. 07099 1266 8

Nicholas Hammond is credited as the former editor of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' *Birds* magazine who turned its front cover into a novel and prestigious easel of patronage for British bird illustrators. Many of the then little-known contributors have progressed to earn a place in this book (which concentrates almost entirely on birds), along with the best from continental Europe, North America and Australasia.

The introductory chapters and the intimate biographical essays on each artist betray much soul-searching over the view that wildlife art is at best a representational and at worst a merely decorative skill, excluded from the mainstream of art. Hammond's portfolio gives the reader ample scope for exploring the genre's disputed boundaries. At one extreme, there is the type of illustration that satisfies the desire of the western world for a precise visual taxonomy of the nature. Roger Tory Peterson, pioneer of the modern schematic field guide, has thus made a deep impression on the way we perceive animals. So riveting are the search images he created that birdwatchers often see birds as he painted them rather than as they really are. The opportunity for sensitive matching of impression with reality was grasped by a mass audience brought up on Victorian wildlife romanticism, and has honed the observational skills of successive generations. At this level enthusiasts have become increasingly discriminating and demand high standards of verisimilitude.

Such expectations engender conflicting judgments and divided loyalties were the artist has a wider vision. A leading ornithologist once remarked to me that the innovative

Preying on the suburbs

John R. G. Turner

STEPHEN HARRIS
Urban Foxes. 128pp. Whittell Books. £4.95. 0905493472

American cities have blue jays and trash-raiding raccoons. Ours have been acquiring magpies and dustbin-frequenting foxes. The fox invasion has been attributed to the devastation of the rural rabbit population, one of the foxes' main sources of food; but this might have been expected to fill towns with starving foxes in the 1950s, not, as was actually the case, with well-fed foxes in the 1940s. What changed was neither countryside nor fox, but British taste in town planning. The early suburban semi with its big garden, small shed and sunny outhouse roof created the perfect habitat. The bourgeois fox is to be seen today chiefly in the Tory-voting wards of our southern cities. City-centre foxes, like the one that was once chased round Trafalgar Square, are young males that went the wrong way while looking for somewhere a bit quieter to set up home.

Suburban foxes can cause garden mayhem and 999 calls from people who have mistaken their cries for those of murder victims. They eat plants, mice and small birds, and it is unwise to leave your pet hamster inadequately caged out of doors. In short, they have most of the faults and charms of the so-called "domestic" cat (which, contrary to myth, they are very unlikely to eat), and are correspondingly popular with town-dwellers (although there is a clandestine trade in the pelts of snared urban foxes).

Guy Traughton's drawings, both funny and serious, are a delight, and Stephen Harris, the zoologist on the team that made the *Fox Watch* television programmes, has written a work of rare charm: an entirely readable book that contains much hard information on ecology and animal behaviour.

Eric Ennion's lapwings seemed to him like squashed frogs. But it is artists like Ennion, John Busby, Robert Greenhalf and the delightful Robert Hainard who have stretched the frontiers of their art and given us fresh insights into nature. For Busby and like-minded explorers, "to copy nature without resolving one's own thoughts and feelings is a barren experience".

If there is one thread of consistency in this range of aspirations it is almost universal acclaim for the work of the Swedish master Bruno Liljefors, and admiration for his living compatriot Lars Jonsson. In such company the Swedish artist Hakan Delin humbly says he feels like "a sparrow among the dancing cranes"; this fine book pays homage to them all.



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John R. G. Turner

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In the nineteenth century we do indeed find philosophers for whom aesthetics provides a central subject-matter and a central task. I think of Schiller and Hegel, of Kierkegaard, and above all of Nietzsche, whose flight towards the aesthetic followed an act of decisive unparallelled in the history of thought. And if proof is needed of the ease with which the aesthetic may replace the religious as an object of philosophical interest, it is to be found in the thought and the personality of Nietzsche. Nietzsche's philosophy arose out of art and the thought of art: it involved an effort to perceive the world through aesthetic value, to find a way of life that would raise nobility, glory and tragic beauty to the place that had been occupied by moral goodness and by faith. And of course, among philosophers, Nietzsche is one of the great stylists, rivalled among those who came after him only by Wittgenstein.

No such philosopher could exist in the anglophone tradition, for the simple reason that, if he did exist, he would not be called a philosopher, either by others or by himself. He would be identified as a critic or a social theorist, as an essayist or a reformer. Nevertheless, the transformation heralded in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* also took place in Britain. The search for the meaning of the world shifted from speculative theology to aesthetics, just as it had done in Germany. It is thanks to Coleridge, Arnold and Ruskin that students at a British university are now in a position to learn that there are more serious problems on earth than are dreamed of in analytical philosophy.

Nor did literary criticism lose, in our century, its place in the vanguard of the English-speaker's quest for meaning. The debates that were begun in the last century by Arnold and Newman were carried over into our times by Eliot, Chesterton, C. S. Lewis and finally – last representative of a "great tradition" – F. R. Leavis. And it was perhaps only in the famous "Two Cultures" debate, in which Leavis made mincemeat of C. P. Snow's suggestion that there could be a "culture" of science, that the question which had bothered Central European writers for upwards of half a century was at last articulated in Britain.³ The question is a philosophical one, and of the first importance. Nevertheless, it is a singular fact that it was left to a literary critic to articulate it, and a singular fact, too, that no major analytical philosopher has subsequently shown the slightest interest in what he said. It is hardly surprising, in view of this, that Leavis dismissed philosophy in general (and Cambridge philosophy in particular) as a subject which had lost contact with the human world.

I shall express Leavis's position in his controversy with Snow in my own terms. To possess a culture is not only to possess a body of knowledge or expertise; it is not simply to have accumulated facts, references and theories. It is to possess a sensibility, a response, a way of seeing things, which is in some special way redemptive. Culture is not a matter of academic knowledge but of participation. And participation changes not merely your thoughts and beliefs but your perceptions and emotions. The question therefore unavoidably arises whether scientific knowledge, and the habits of curiosity and experiment which engender it, are really the friends or the foes of culture? Could it be that the habit of scientific explanation may take over from the habit of emotional response, or in some way undermine the picture of the world upon which our moral life is founded? Could it be that scientific knowledge leads precisely in the opposite direction from a culture – not to the education of feeling, but to its destruction, not to the acceptance and affirmation of the human world, but to a kind of sickness and alienation from it, an overbearing sense of its contingency?

The question returns me to my theme. For Leavis the task of culture was a sacred task. Culture had in some way both to express and to justify our participation in the human world. And the greatest products of a culture – those works of art that Arnold had called "touchstones" – were to be studied as the supreme distillations of this justifying force. In them we find neither theoretical knowledge, nor practical advice, but life: life restored to its meaning, vindicated and made whole. Through our encounter with these works our moral sense is

liberated, and the fine division between good and evil, positive and negative, affirmative and destructive, made once more apparent, written everywhere across the surface of the world.

To take such a view is to raise the aesthetic to the pinnacle of authority upon which Kant and Schiller had placed it. And, given his sceptical premises – his Lawrentian belief that value is not transcendent but immanent, contained in life itself – Leavis can hardly stop short of the conclusion that, whatever consolation and significance men have sought in worship, they may find it more securely in the modern world through culture. The touchstones of our culture convey to us the meanings which others have found in liturgy, ritual and prayer. It is unsurprising to find Leavis pointing to Bunyan and Blake as his authorities, or to find him extolling, as landmarks of our literary tradition, the Bible of King James, and the now vandalized liturgy of the Church of England. For it is precisely in sacred works and liturgies that the emotional memory of a civilization is recorded, and it is in the works of prophets that a language strives to its utmost towards the perception of a justifying sense.

Leavis's attack on the idea of a scientific culture has all the character of a holy war – it is a defence of the faith against the infidel, of the Israelites against the Philistines. It is interesting that the word "philistine", used so as to denote the enemy of civilization, entered the English language from Germany, through the writings of Carlyle. The expression was coined by the German students of Schiller's day, and immortalized on their behalf by Robert Schumann. In borrowing it, Carlyle, Arnold, Ruskin and their followers entered the battle on Schiller's side. The confrontation between science and culture that we find in Leavis is foreshadowed in the conflicts between Coleridge and Bentham, between Arnold and the Philistines, between Ruskin and the immovable apparatus of Podsnappery by which he saw himself surrounded. All of them are heirs to that conception of the aesthetic which we find in Kant and Schiller, according to which aesthetic experience stands in the place of worship, our key to the moral health of humanity and to the meaning of the world.

In my view, the question discussed by Leavis and his forebears is not only philosophical; it is one of the most important of all philosophical questions. Nor has it been entirely ignored by philosophers. For one in particular – Edmund Husserl – it was central to what he called, in the apocalyptic idiom of Central Europe, "The Crisis of the European Sciences (*Wissenschaften*)". To put in a nutshell a thought which may or may not be contained in the tens of thousands of Husserlian pages, it is this: science has offered us a paradigm of objective knowledge. According to this paradigm, all reference to the subject of experience is to be eliminated from the description of the world. In seeking to emulate science, the various studies, even those which have man as their primary subject-matter, have tried to abstract from what is given in human experience, to purge the human subject, so to speak, from the archive of knowledge, and to achieve a kind of Stalinist history of the world, in which all persons are unpersons. The attempt, however, is fraught with paradox. For the human subject is the starting point of enquiry, and to refine him out of our science is to lose sight of the very thing that science endeavours to explain.⁴

I agree with one part of Husserl's claim. It seems to me that there are forms of understanding (*Wissenschaften*) which do not possess the objectivity of science, being derived from man's self-conception, rather than from the impersonal observation of natural processes. Nevertheless, they possess another kind of objectivity, a convergence upon a common fund of superficial truth, which entitles them to their own claims to knowledge. If philosophy has a central task, it is to protect these forms of knowledge, to anchor them once again in human consciousness, and to strike down the pretensions of science to give us the whole truth of what we are.

I draw a contrast between two modes of understanding: scientific understanding, which aims to explain the world as it is; and "intentional understanding", which aims to describe, criticize and justify the world as it appears. The second is an attempt to understand the world in terms of the concepts through which we experi-

ence and act on it: these concepts identify the "intentional objects" of our states of mind. An intentional understanding therefore fills the world with the meanings implicit in our aims and emotions. It tries not so much to explain the occasions for action, the objects of sympathy, and the places of rest. The object of such an understanding is not the scientific universe described by scientific theory, but the *Lebenswelt*, the world as it is revealed, in and through the life-process which attaches us to it.

This distinction explains what I have called the "priority of appearance". Scientific penetration into the depth of things may render the surface unintelligible – or at least intelligible only slowly and painfully, and with a hesitancy that undermines the immediate needs of human action. (Such is the case, I have argued, with the critical phenomenon of sexual desire.) As agents we belong to the surface of the world, and enter into immediate relation with it. The concepts through which



A *Danid* from the *Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum* – reproduced from Augustus: *Kunst und Leben in Rom um die Zeitenwende* (279pp. Munich: Hirmer, 377/42298).

we represent it form a vital link with reality, and without this link appropriate action and appropriate response could not emerge with the rapidity and competence that alone can ensure our happiness and survival. We cannot replace our most basic everyday concepts with anything more useful than themselves – even if we can find concepts with greater explanatory power. Our everyday concepts have evolved under the pressure of human circumstance, and in answer to the needs of generations. Any "rational reconstruction" – however obedient it may be to the underlying truth of things and to the requirements of scientific objectivity – runs the risk of severing the vital connection which links our response to the world, and the world to our response, in a chain of spontaneous human competence.

The concepts which inform our emotions bear the stamp of a shared human interest, and of a constantly developing form of life. Whence do they come? The answer is implicit in Leavis's attack on Snow: these concepts are the gift of a culture, being neither consciously made nor deliberately chosen but inherited. It is by the use of such concepts that the moral reality of our world is described: concepts of good and evil, sacred and profane, tragic and comic, just and unjust – all of them rooted in that one vital idea which, I would contend, denotes no natural kind, and conveys a classification that could feature in no true scientific theory of man: the concept of the person. The concepts of a culture classify the world in terms of the appropriate action and the appropriate response. A rational being has need of such concepts, which bring his emotions together in the object, to enable him – as the Hegelians would say – to find his identity in the world and not in opposition to it. A culture, moreover, is essentially shared: its concepts and images bear the mark of participation, and are intrinsically consoling. In the matter of a religious communion or an act of worship, they close again the gap between subject and object

which yawns so frighteningly in the world of science.

Extrangement from the world is the poisoned gift of science. For Coleridge and his followers the same extrangement attaches to utilitarianism – that morality of the Philistines which was launched into the world by the smiling idiot Jeremy Bentham, and which has marched onwards ever since. The hostility to "Benthamism" was inherited by Leavis, and became fundamental to his moral vision. And one can see why. Utilitarianism represents the attempt by science to take charge of our moral lives: the attempt by the objective perspective to displace the subject from his throne. The utilitarian sees the world not as it appears to the agent, but as it is in the eyes of the conscientious observer. The utilitarian morality rises above the individual's predicament, and sees the meaning of his actions in their long-term success or disaster, freely availing himself of concepts which form no part of the individual's reasoning.

Suppose a tribesman is dancing in honour of the god of war. To the observing anthropologist, steeped in functionalist and utilitarian thinking, the dance is a means to raise the spirits, and to increase the cohesion of the tribe, at a time of danger. This description both explains and justifies. Nevertheless, it does not tell us what the dance means to the dancer. It is the tribesman thinks of his dance in that way, then he is alienated from it: he loses his motive to dance; once he borrows the language of the anthropologist. His first-person reason for dancing (because the god demands it) is precisely opaque to the third-person perspective: by shutting the dancer within his dance, it abolishes the distance between agent and action. Of course, in this case, the first-person reason is founded in error: there is no god of war. But a culture need not be rooted in error: it may remain "on the surface", in the way necessary to engage with our acts and emotions, and at the same time free itself from superstition. It then ceases to be a culture only, and becomes a *civilization*, sending its branches into theology, philosophy, art and law.

Even when it has launched itself, however, on the path of critical thinking, a culture cannot forswear "the priority of appearance". It is to offer us the precious gift of participation must resist the pursuit of an unobtainable objectivity. Utilitarianism fails as a moral theory because, aspiring to objectivity, it begins to justify actions in terms which remove the motive to engage in them. Utilitarianism purges our actions of their sense, by displacing the concepts under which we intend them. (Consider, for example, how the utilitarian justification of punishment erodes the will to punish, by abolishing the concept of retribution through which punishment obtains its "sense".)

In our post-Enlightenment world, it is natural that we should look elsewhere than towards religion for the "sense" of our actions. And Kant was in a way right to single out the aesthetic as, so to speak, next in line to the Eucharist, as the source of meaning. The object of aesthetic understanding is given to us and through experience, and has no life outside the "intuition" in which it is embodied. In aesthetic judgment, therefore, we aim to achieve the finest possible understanding of *how things seem*. All art is semblance, and (Plato notwithstanding) this is the source of its value. Art brings us to the very same point that we are brought to by religion – to an experience saturated by meaning, whose value overwhelms us with the force of law. In aesthetic experience we perceive the fittingness of the world, and of our place within it. For a moment we set aside the relentless curiosity of science, and the habit of instrumental thinking. We see the world as it really seems: in Wallace Stevens's words, we "let be final of seem" (although there are other emperors besides the Emperor of Ice Cream). In the aesthetic moment we encounter a unity of form and content, of experience and thought. This fact, which places the reach of aesthetic experience outside the reach of science, explains its peculiar value. In the moment of beauty we encounter directly the sense of the world; and in tragedy the most terrible things may cease to be strange to us, and cease to be so metaphysically threatening. Even the nothingness of death may be overcome.

death is not a nothing, but a something, a part of that very order which it seems to deny. Death exists in tragedy as a pattern in the world of appearance, and is lifted free from its mundanity. (In tragedy, a man's death becomes part of his life.)

When meaning and experience are welded together, the first is secured against the second. The habit of uniting them in contemplation is the aim and reward of aesthetic education – of that induction into a culture which Leavis recommends. The aesthetic education locks our modern dancer within his place, just as an unquestioned culture locked our warrior tribesman within his:

... great-rooted blossom,
... the leaf, the blossom, or the bole?
... they swung to music, a brightening glance,
... or can we know the dancer from the dance?

aesthetic experience, which stands outside instrumental calculations and outside science, is one of the greatest practical imports to life like us, who move on the surface of things. To engage now with those distant parts of life which are not of immediate concern, to subvert into the present choice the full reality of life which stretches into distant moral space, I must lift that experience out of the immediate preoccupation and endow it with a meaning, in which my humanity is embodied and accepted. Hence I have a need, as a rational creature, for aesthetic experience, and for the habits and customs which engender it. The utilitarian calculation can substitute for this experience, which consists in a projection forwards of the acting self. The ability to participate imaginatively in future experiences is one of the aims of aesthetic education: without that ability, a man may have as coherent a purpose as he likes; but he will not know what it is like to achieve it, and his pursuit of it will be to that extent irrational. Failure to appreciate this point, I have argued, underlies the disaster

Worlds within worlds

David Watkin

ALEXANDER TZONIS and LIANE LEFAIVRE
Classical Architecture: The poetics of order
Mpp. MIT, £19.95 (paperback, £9.95).
00220097

This is the most stimulating book that the current revival of classicism in architecture has so far produced. It should be read by all students in schools of architecture, as well as by those who still believe that the classical orders are isolated and irrelevant. Insisting that "the critical potentials of classicism", in its revival today, "arise from the fact that we belong to a generation of crisis and frequently of counter-culture", Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefavre describe their book as "an effort to understand the secret of classical architecture's eternal youth". Their brilliant and single-minded pursuit of this goal leads them to dismiss the associational, sentimental and picturesque overtones of classicism, particularly as exemplified in recent Post-Modern buildings. Through concentrating on essentials not accidentals, they aim "to recover classical architecture from citationism in the service of the fading Elysium of nostalgia". It is perhaps no accident that the book emerges from the Technische Hogeschool at Delft, for there is something of Dutch Calvinism in its ruthless logic: "Swans and dolphins," we learn, "garlands, wings and torches, scrolls and sphinxes might crumble," but taxis will remain.

Taxis, a key category in Vitruvius' *De Architectura*, is an organizational principle involving the division of architectural works into "members". This method of producing a framework is only the first of the three levels which govern the composition of a classical building. Taxis itself contains two sublevels or "members": the grid, either polar or rectangular, and tripartition. The division of a building into three parts is, according to Tzonis and Lefavre, echoed in the tripartite composition of every feature of the orders. Thus, the entablature, column and stylobate form a tripartite unit, while the entablature itself consists of three members: cornice, frieze and architrave;

of utilitarian and modernist architecture – an architecture which denies the priority of appearance, and denies the tradition which has formed and educated the human eye.

Philosophy, to the extent that it takes the study of the *Lebenswelt* as its primary concern, must return aesthetics to the place that Kant and Hegel made for it: a place at the centre of the subject, the paradigm of philosophy, and the true test of all its claims. Philosophy, I have suggested, ought to be, not the handmaiden of the sciences, but the seamstress of the *Lebenswelt*. Philosophy must repair the rents made by science in the veil of Maya, through which the winds of nihilism now blow coldly over us. And, even with the needle and thread of conceptual analysis, this labour of piety can begin.

And there is, as I remarked at the outset, a great need for it. Unless philosophy resumes its place as the foundation of the humanities, those disciplines which have the human world as their subject-matter will be exposed to intellectual corruption. Tempted now by the *fata Morgana* of deconstruction, now by sociological pseudo-science, they will wander from their purpose, in a desert of unmeaning, and dwindle into parched unwholesome remnants of themselves. The defence of humane education therefore requires the defence of philosophy. But philosophy can be defended only if it has aesthetics at its heart.

- (1) H. Bloom et al., eds, *Deconstruction and Criticism*, London, 1979.
- (2) Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Works and Worlds of Art*, Oxford, 1980, p. 9.
- (3) "Two Cultures? The Significance of Lord Snow", in F. R. Leavis, *Nor Shall My Sword*, London, 1972.
- (4) See Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, ed. W. Biemel, The Hague, 1966, Part 2.

This is an abridged version of an inaugural lecture given at Birkbeck College, University of London.

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"This substantial and attractive book should be warmly welcomed. A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop's translation of *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology* by Pierre Grimal, originally published in French in 1951, is a work at once authoritative and complete. Anyone who has ever lost his way in the complex genealogies of the Greek gods and heroes will value the forty genealogical tables; scholars will appreciate the superbly detailed references to the ancient sources for each entry, as well as the helpful (and modernized) table of sources, in which care has been taken to list the editions which are most easily accessible for English readers (especially, and relevantly, the Loeb Classical Library), and there is a full index. . . . The black-and-white illustrations are copious and pertinent. My sampling of the entries and references found an impressive standard of accuracy; the generous cross-referencing given makes browsing an almost mandatory pleasure, and it will indeed be a learned reader who does not find something he did not previously know on almost every page.

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J. H. C. Leach TLS 8th August 1986

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